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Leading learning and skills

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007: Further Education

July 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in sustaining and improving learning and skills opportunities across the further education system

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Introduction



Research background

1 This report presents the findings for 31,742 learners in the further education (FE) system. These learners were surveyed as part of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) 2007, which was conducted by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and included a total of 43,756 interviews with learners.

2 The NLSS is a large tracking survey of LSC-funded learners aged 16 and over. It provides the LSC and its partners with a wealth of data on learners' satisfaction with their learning experience over time, including detailed information on three key aspects of the learner journey:

- initial choice and information;
- support during learning; and
- the benefits of participation.

3 There have been five national surveys since 2001 (annually between 2001 and 2004, and again in 2007). Since 2003, each survey has comprised over 43,000 telephone interviews with learners.

4 The survey is composed of three waves, each dealing with a distinct set of modular questions:

- pre-entry advice and guidance (wave 12);
- support for learners (wave 13); and
- impact of learning (wave 14).

5 There is a set of core questions that are covered in all three waves:

- overall satisfaction with the learning experience;
- overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching and management of learning; and
- how likely the learner is to return to learning in the future.

6 The NLSS covers learners in FE, work-based learning (WBL), learndirect and personal and community development learning (PCDL). The FE category includes general FE colleges, sixth form colleges, other specialist colleges and learning delivered by an adult learning provider.

7 In 2007, a pilot survey was also conducted with learners in offender institutions, reflecting the LSC's role in managing, planning, funding and delivering the new integrated Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across all nine English regions. The findings for these learners are reported separately.

Methodology

8 Interviews for the NLSS were conducted by telephone between 19 February and 26 July 2007. A minimum quota was set of 500 interviews per local LSC – to enable an analysis of FE learners by LSC.

9 Data for the FE system has been weighted by regional LSC and by status (full-time or part-time), using the known profile from individualised learner records (ILR) from October 2007. Further details can be found in the 2007 technical report.

Sample profile

10 Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the FE learner sample (based on weighted data obtained from the survey) and the proportion of learners who reported having a disability or learning difficulties.

Table 1: Demographics of the sample profile

| | Percentage of respondents |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Age | |
| 16–20 | 41 |
| 21–30 | 13 |
| 31–40 | 15 |
| 41–50 | 15 |
| 51–60 | 9 |
| 61+ | 6 |
| Refused to respond | 1 |
| Gender | |
| Male | 39 |
| Female | 61 |
| Ethnicity | |
| Asian | 6 |
| Black | 5 |
| Mixed | 2 |
| White | 86 |
| Other | * |
| Refused to respond | * |
| Disability | |
| Yes | 6 |
| Learning difficulties | |
| Yes | 7 |

Note: the base was all FE learners (31,742). An asterisk denotes values that are above zero but less than 0.5%.



11 The large majority of respondents (92 per cent) were studying at an FE college. One in 20 (5 per cent) was at a sixth form college, and the remaining 3 per cent were at a specialist or other provider.

12 Figure 1 shows the range of subjects studied by FE learners. The three most common subject areas were health, social care and public services (16 per cent), information and communication technology (12 per cent) and English, languages and communication (11 per cent).

Multivariate analysis

13 In addition to standard analysis of the data, the following analysis techniques were used.

- **Multiple regression** (also known as key driver analysis) was used to examine the relative importance of a range of factors in explaining overall satisfaction with the learning experience.
- **Chi-squared automatic interaction detector** (CHAID) analysis was conducted to segment the learner population according to their propensity to express satisfaction with their learning experience.

14 CHAID uses statistical techniques to select:

- the key determinants or drivers (such as current learning status, gender, age, ethnicity or course level); and
- the groups that are most and least likely to exhibit these characteristics.

15 The advantage the CHAID technique has over standard analysis is that it identifies the relative strength of variables. Variables identified nearer the top of the CHAID tree are more strongly related to the dependent (satisfaction with learning experience) than other variables included in the model (whether they are identified or not).

Presentation of findings

16 It should be remembered that only a sample of learners have been interviewed and not the entire learner population. Consequently, all results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences are statistically significant. **This report comments only on findings that are statistically significant.**

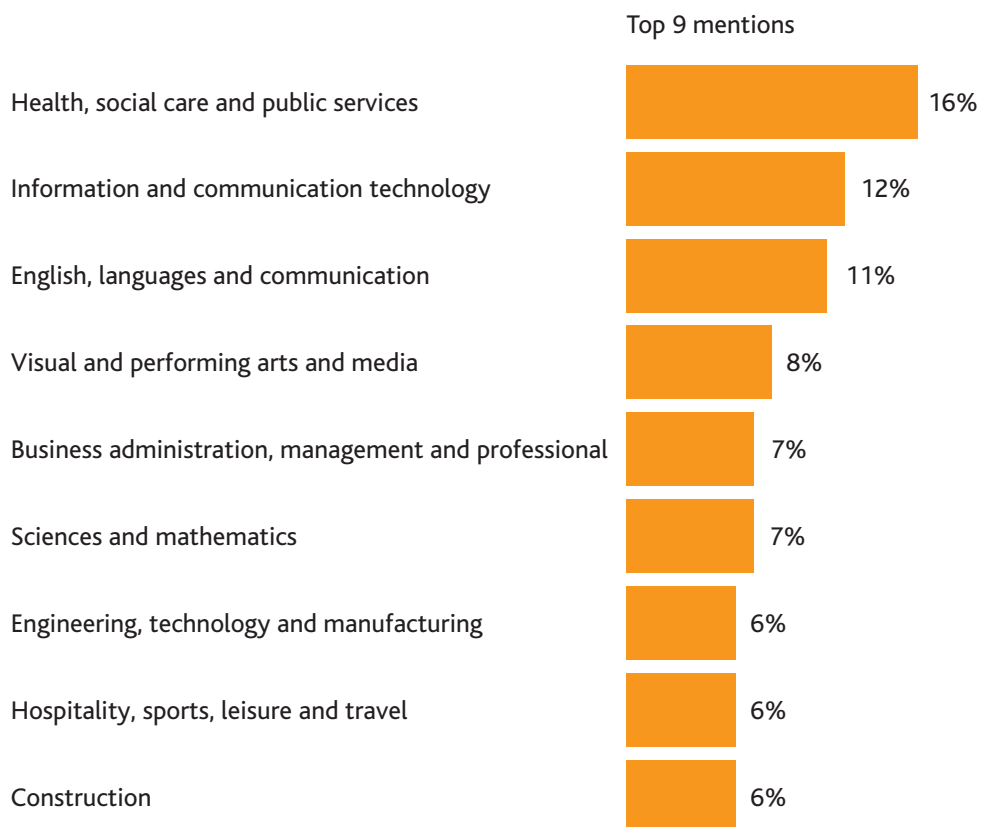
17 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this is due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) denotes values above zero but less than 0.5 per cent.

18 In the report, reference is made to 'combined scores'. This is where we have combined 'extremely', 'very' and 'fairly', or 'strongly' and 'tend to' scores. The report also makes reference to 'net' figures, which represent the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions. 'Net satisfaction' figures represent the percentage of respondents who were satisfied with a particular issue, less the percentage who were dissatisfied. For example, if the figures for one aspect of learning show 40 per cent satisfied and 25 per cent dissatisfied, the 'net satisfaction' figure is +15 points.

19 Combined and net scores are calculated using the true value of the scores before they are rounded. This occasionally results in a small discrepancy (usually one percentage point) between the combined score and the sum of the rounded scores that it relates to.

20 The report also makes reference to 'mean' scores for questions where learners were asked to rank an aspect of their course or provider on a scale of 1 to 10. The mean score is calculated by adding the scores provided by all learners and dividing this figure by the number of learners answering the question.

Figure 1: Subjects studied by FE learners



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



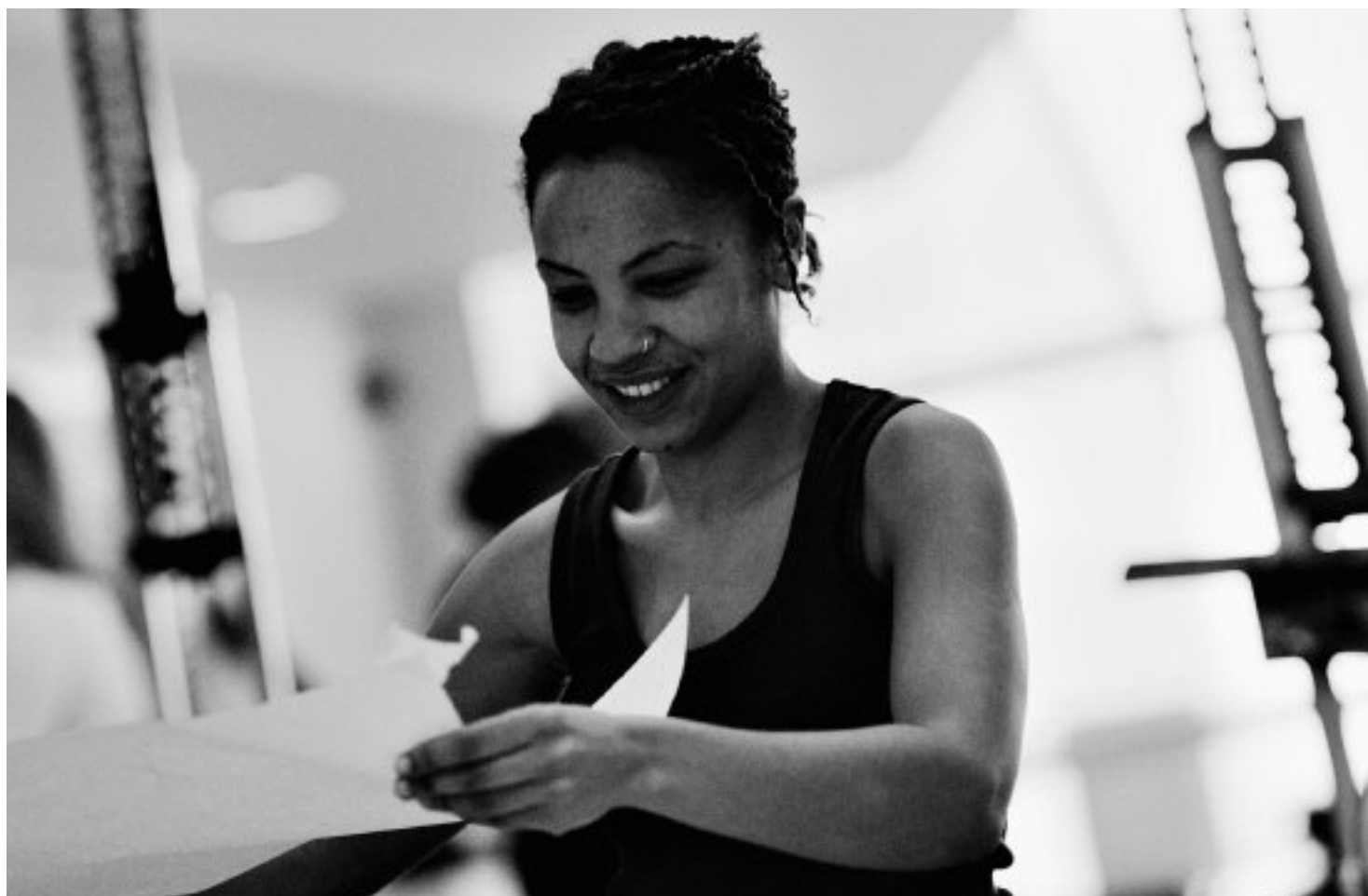
Report structure

21 This introduction is followed by a 'Summary and Implications' section, which highlights the key findings. The report then provides a detailed commentary on the findings.

- The 'Overall Satisfaction' section looks at learners' overall satisfaction with their learning experience, including an assessment of what drives satisfaction, and an examination of learners who leave their course early.
- The 'Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider' section covers learners' satisfaction with the quality of their teaching, attitudes to their course tutor and other staff, as well as an examination of how learners feel they have been treated.
- The 'Pre-entry Information, Advice and Guidance' section also deals with learners' reasons for choosing their course and provider and the level of information they received about the course.

- The 'Learner Support' section examines the overall level of support given by providers, as well as how any problems or complaints have been handled.
- The 'Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning' section deals with how respondents feel about learning in general and about how their course has helped them. It also looks at learners' expectations for undertaking further learning.
- The 'Learners from learndirect' section summarises the findings of the core questions for learndirect learners.

22 Throughout the report, comparisons are made with findings from NLSS studies from previous years.



Summary and Implications



Summary

Satisfaction with the learning experience

23 Overall, nine learners in ten (90 per cent) were satisfied with their learning experience, including 27 per cent who were extremely satisfied. Just 7 per cent were dissatisfied. These figures are similar to those obtained in 2004/05, and represent a continuous longer-term increase since 2001/02.

24 Three learners in four (73 per cent) said that they would speak highly of their learning provider, while just 6 per cent said that they would be critical.

25 The key factor influencing overall satisfaction was the learner's status on the course – specifically whether they had either left the course early or failed the course. These learners were less satisfied with their learning experience than were other learners.

26 The qualification currently being studied was also important, with satisfaction levels being higher among those who were studying at lower levels. Older learners also tended to be more positive about their learning experience, and satisfaction was higher among white learners than among those from other ethnic groups.

27 It should be noted, though, that these differences were small. Satisfaction was high across all demographic groups.

28 The quality of teaching continues to have a significant impact on learners' overall satisfaction. Staff making their subject interesting and enjoyable, teachers or tutors providing support, and the planning and organisation of lessons all emerged as being key components of the learning experience.

Satisfaction with the teaching and the provider

29 The vast majority of learners (89 per cent) were satisfied with the quality of teaching or training – just 7 per cent were dissatisfied. Learners were also positive about specific aspects of teaching – in particular the teacher's knowledge of their subject and how the teacher related to the learner as an individual.

30 Three learners in four said that all or most of their lessons were spent increasing their knowledge or understanding of their course. The most common problem reported by learners was other students arriving late.

31 Attitudes to teaching and specific aspects of the course have not changed since the 2004/05 survey. Sub-group variations on these issues were generally the same as for overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

32 Almost all respondents said that they were treated fairly and with respect by their learning provider (both 95 per cent). However, at least one learner in four said that they were not consulted about various issues (such as the quality of the learning programme and how to improve it, and the college and its facilities). In contrast to our findings about teaching and the overall learning experience, younger learners and those studying at Level 3 or above gave the most positive responses to this question.

Pre-entry information, advice and guidance

33 Learners' main reasons for choosing their course tended to be work related – many of them had chosen their course in order to help them to get a job, to get a different job or to gain promotion. This applied in particular to those studying at Level 2 or above, and to those in the 19 to 24 age group.

34 However, a wide range of other reasons were also given: many learners said that they had chosen their course because they liked the subject, because of a personal interest, in order to advance their skills and knowledge, because it was relevant to their job, because it would help them to gain qualifications or because it would help them to move on in education.

35 Most learners said that they had chosen their provider because of its location. The other two reasons given for choosing a particular provider were its reputation and the fact that it offered the right course.

36 Learners generally felt well informed about their course before enrolling. They said that they had felt particularly well informed about the course content and about the standard of work expected. Younger learners and those studying at Level 2 or above were the most positive.

Learner support

37 Almost all learners said that help from teachers or tutors was available to them when they needed it. The availability of services and facilities (e.g. libraries and computers) was greater in sixth form colleges and for 16- to 18-year-olds than for other learners. (Note the overlap between these two sub-groups: 75 per cent of sixth form learners are aged 16 to 18.)

38 Older learners and those studying at lower levels were generally more positive than other learners about the management of issues relating to the course (such as teacher continuity, staffing and support for learners).

39 Three learners in five (60 per cent) had experienced at least one type of problem (such as keeping up with work, problems with motivation, travel and money pressure, or dealing with other external pressures). Around one in three (31 per cent) had sought help from their provider, and most (77 per cent) had found this help to have been useful.

40 One learner in eight (13 per cent) said that they had made a complaint to their provider about the course or about other

experiences. Complaints were most likely to concern poor teaching or the incompetence or ignorance of teachers.

41 The 2007 survey showed a slight increase in the number of learners who had experienced a problem and sought help from their provider, as well as in the proportion who had made a complaint. However, learners were also more likely than in previous years to have found the help given useful.

Attitudes to learning and the benefits of learning

42 Respondents mostly expressed positive attitudes towards learning, with 72 per cent saying that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it. Overall, attitudes towards learning appeared to be slightly more positive than in the 2004/05 survey, and learners were more likely to say that they had been able to manage their time properly and enjoy new responsibilities.

43 At least three learners in four said that their learning experience had brought them at least one of the following benefits:

- increased enthusiasm for the subject;
- new job-related skills;
- help to move forward in their career;
- more confidence in their ability to learn;
- more creativity and a preparedness to try new things;
- a more positive attitude to learning than when they started.

44 The proportion who said that they had gained various benefits has increased since 2004/05, with the largest increases being in relation to gaining job-related skills, feeling more confident socially, being better at managing time and responsibilities, and being better able to cope with daily life.

45 Three learners in five (61 per cent) said that it was very likely that they would undertake further learning in the next three years or so – a similar proportion to the 2004/05 survey.

Early leavers

46 Learners who left their course early can be divided into two groups. The first group left for reasons related to the course itself – either because they felt the course was not as expected or was not right for them, or because they were unimpressed with the teaching. The second group left early because of external factors – family, work, health or other personal issues.

47 Early leavers were less satisfied than other learners with most aspects of their learning experience. Their biggest issue was that they had not been consulted enough by their provider, but they were also more likely than other learners to have encountered other problems (including not being able to maintain personal motivation).

48 However (reflecting the fact that many early leavers had left for reasons that were not related to their course), most were at least fairly positive about their learning experience. Half said that it was very likely that they would undertake further learning in the next three years.

Implications

49 Learners' overall satisfaction with their learning experience was very high, and at a similar level to previous years of the survey. However, early leavers were much less positive – both overall and in relation to specific aspects of the course – as well as being less likely to obtain positive outcomes. As a result, minimising the number of early leavers will be the most effective means of improving overall satisfaction levels among learners.

50 The survey identified the importance of pre-entry advice and guidance. Learners' main reason for leaving early was that the course was not appropriate for them, and early leavers' main reason for dissatisfaction was that the course was not as expected.

51 However, the range of difficulties reported by early leavers indicates that advice needs to be wide-ranging. It needs to cover the course itself, but it also needs to have the potential to pre-empt wider problems (such as conflicting commitments and financial difficulties).

52 Previous research (DfES, 2007b) has highlighted the importance of information and guidance on a wide range of issues, including the option to defer (rather than dropping out altogether). The type of advice required by learners is relevant to current government planning: the Government has recently announced its intention to introduce a new joined-up advice service, to help people move into work and learning (DIUS and DWP, 2007).

53 The survey identified aspects of the learning experience that have a significant impact on overall satisfaction: staff making their subject interesting and enjoyable, the planning and organisation of lessons, and teachers or tutors providing support. This last element ties in with more general findings about the importance of advice and support during the course (as well as at the pre-entry stage): many learners said that they had not been consulted by their provider about aspects of the course, the provider itself or its facilities. This is now being addressed through the LSC's learner involvement strategy, which places increasing emphasis on making sure that providers involve learners in decisions that affect their learning experience (LSC, 2007a).

54 Three learners in five had experienced at least one type of problem (such as keeping up with work, problems with motivation, travel and money pressures, or dealing with other external pressures), and the incidence of these problems appears to be increasing slightly.

55 While learners were generally satisfied with the way their provider dealt with these issues – and with the level of support generally – these findings stress the importance of consultation with and support for learners during their course. Further research could be helpful in establishing in greater detail the ways in which learners might be supported.

56 Satisfaction with the course tended to be higher among those studying at lower levels. However, differences between different groups (in terms of both demographics and the type of course) were small, suggesting that no particular group of learners has a significantly better or worse experience than any other.

57 Learners reported a range of benefits and positive outcomes from their courses. Encouragingly, in this survey there was an increase in the number of respondents who said that they had gained job-related skills via their course. There was also an increase in the proportion who said that they had gained life skills (such as social confidence, an ability to cope better with daily life, and an ability to manage time and responsibilities).

Overall Satisfaction

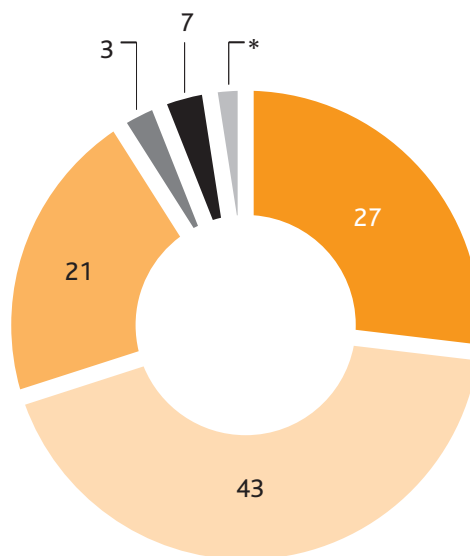
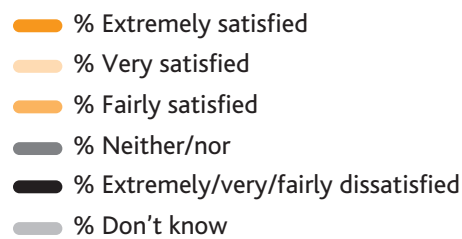
58 This section examines learners' attitudes towards their overall learning experience, and identifies the factors that have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction – in relation both to learner characteristics and to specific components of the course. It also covers learners' reasons for leaving their course early.

Satisfaction with the learning experience

59 Learners expressed high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience. Overall, nine learners in ten (90 per cent) were satisfied with their current learning experience, including 27 per cent who were extremely satisfied. Just 7 per cent were dissatisfied (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Satisfaction with the current learning experience

How satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/training provider?

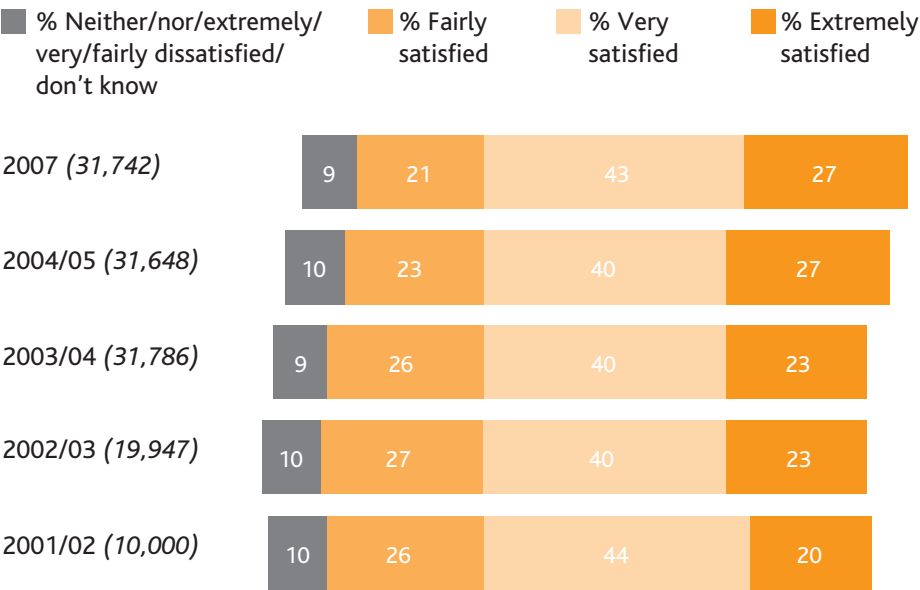


Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



60 Figure 3 shows that satisfaction is currently at a similar level to where it was in 2004/05, and that there has been an increase since 2001/02 in the number of learners who are 'extremely satisfied'.

Figure 3: FE learners' satisfaction with the learning experience over time



Note: the base for each year is shown in brackets.

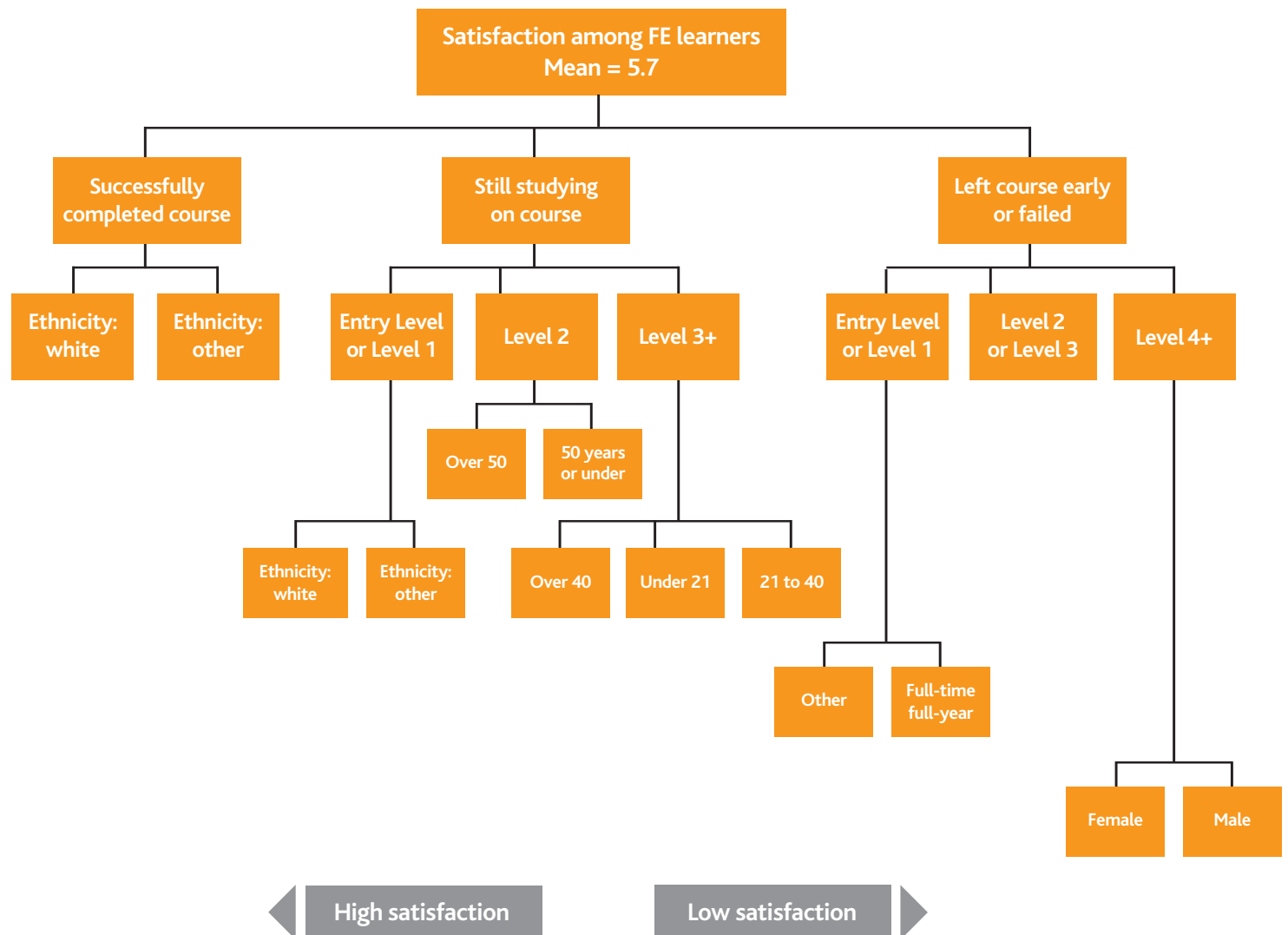


What differentiates learners' views?

61 A CHAID analysis was carried out in order to identify the characteristics that were associated most strongly with overall satisfaction (see paragraphs 13 to 15). The findings are shown in Figure 4.

62 In Figure 4, satisfaction decreases as you move further to the right-hand side of the chart. The figure shows that a respondent's learning status (in particular whether they left their course early or failed it) is the main factor affecting satisfaction. Learners who had either left their course early or failed it were considerably less satisfied with their learning experience than those who had completed their course or who were still studying for it. (Net satisfaction was +40 for early leavers and +22 for those who failed the course, compared with +87 for course completers and +88 for those still studying.)

Figure 4: CHAID analysis of learner satisfaction



Note: the base was 31,692 FE learners.

63 The qualification currently being studied also had an impact on satisfaction levels: satisfaction was higher among learners studying at a lower level (across the sample as a whole, net satisfaction ranged from +85 among those studying at Entry Level or Level 1, to +81 among those studying at Level 4 or Level 5).

64 Two other characteristics are shown in Figure 4.

- **Ethnic group:** satisfaction was higher among white learners than among those in other ethnic groups (this was particularly true of those who had completed their course). This is most apparent in the proportions of learners who were extremely satisfied: overall, this was 27 per cent for white learners, compared with 22 per cent for black and minority ethnic (BME) learners (with no significant differences between individual BME groups).
- **Age:** the CHAID analysis shows that, among those still on their course, satisfaction was highest among older learners. Overall, 30 per cent of learners aged 25 or over were extremely satisfied with their learning experience, compared with 23 per cent of those aged under 25.

Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

65 When learners were asked why they were either satisfied or dissatisfied with their learning experience, their responses were mainly based on four factors.

- **The tutors:** 44 per cent of respondents said that the tutors were good, that they made the course easy or interesting, or that they were helpful.
- **The learning provider:** 25 per cent of learners said that the staff were helpful, 10 per cent said that they were friendly and 6 per cent said that the staff treated them well. In addition, 10 per cent said that the course provider offered good facilities or resources, and 9 per cent said that the location suited them.

- **The course itself:** 39 per cent of respondents said that their course was good, that it met their expectations or that they learnt a lot. A further 9 per cent said that their course was well run, and 10 per cent said that they enjoyed the subject.
- **The learner's progress:** 24 per cent of learners said that their course would give them the experience or qualification that they needed, and 11 per cent were pleased with their progress.

66 Learners who were dissatisfied with the course were most likely to be because:

- they thought it was badly organised or run (36 per cent);
- they perceived their tutors to have a poor attitude (36 per cent);
- they had not received the support they needed (28 per cent);
- they were generally disappointed (26 per cent);
- they felt that communication was poor (20 per cent); and/or
- they felt that there were not enough staff or that there were too many staff changes (16 per cent).

What drives satisfaction with the learning experience?

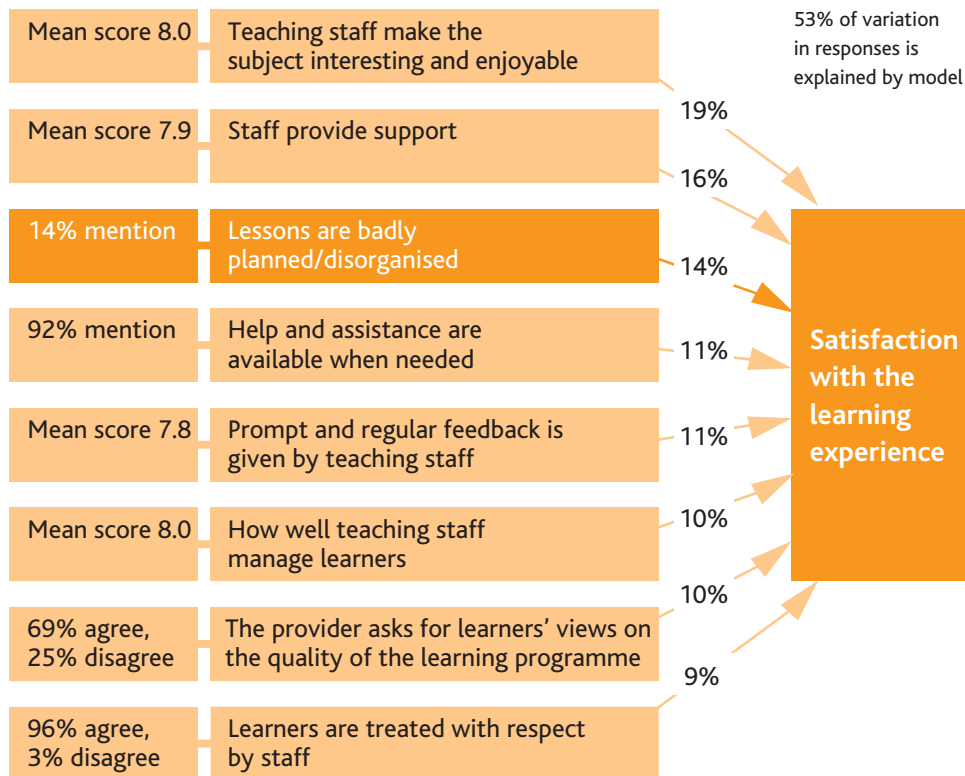
67 As described above, learners' attitudes to their course and tutors featured prominently as reasons for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the learning experience. This supports past research in emphasising the importance of the course tutor in influencing satisfaction, and regression analysis has been carried out as part of previous NLSS studies, showing a very strong relationship between the quality of teaching and overall satisfaction levels among learners.

68 Key driver analysis was undertaken to explore more fully the elements of the learning experience that are associated with overall satisfaction (see paragraphs 13 to 15). The model shown in Figure 5 includes elements relating to the course tutor and other staff at the learning provider, and indicates that a large proportion (53 per cent) of the variation in learners' overall satisfaction can be attributed to these elements.

69 In particular, staff making their subject interesting and enjoyable, teachers or tutors providing support, and the planning and organisation of lessons all emerged as being key components of the learning experience. These issues are covered in more detail in the next section ('Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider').



Figure 5: Key drivers of satisfaction with the learning experience in FE



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners.

70 The model shown in Figure 5 was the most successful in explaining variation in learners' satisfaction levels.

71 Additional key driver analysis models were also conducted to determine which key aspects of the learner journey also have an impact on satisfaction with the learning experience, and the following two emerged:

- information provided about the course – specifically whether learners felt well informed about the content of the course and about the subjects that would be covered; and
- the perceived impact of the course – specifically whether learners felt more positive about learning than when they started, and whether they now had a greater enthusiasm for their subject.

Meeting learners' needs

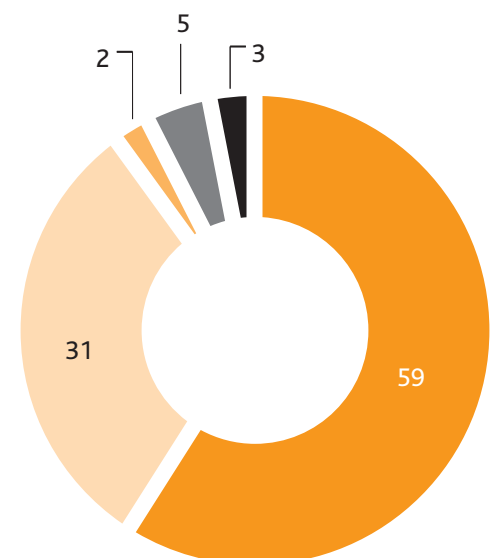
72 Figure 6 shows the extent to which learners felt that their course met their needs. Nine in ten (90 per cent) agreed that the course had met their needs, while 8 per cent disagreed.

73 The percentages shown in Figure 6 correspond very closely to those for overall satisfaction, and attitudes were again less positive among learners who had either left their course early or failed it.

Figure 6: The needs of learners and the support available

Do you agree or disagree that your learning programme is meeting your needs?

- % Strongly agree
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither/nor
- % Tend to disagree
- % Strongly disagree



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



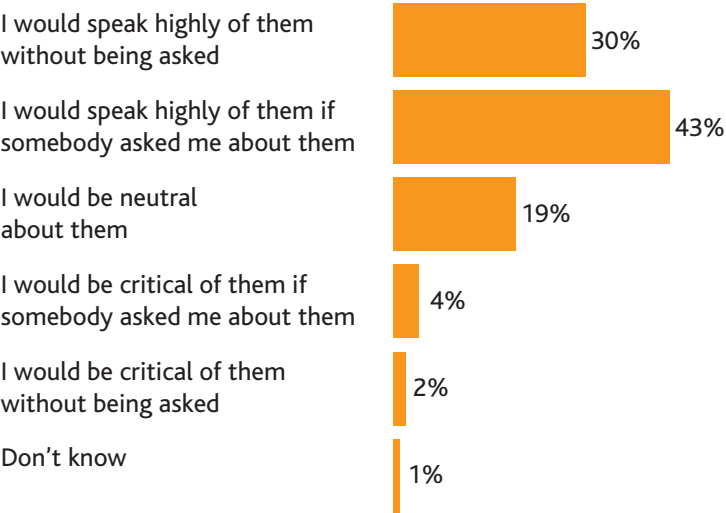
Advocating the provider

74 As is shown in Figure 7, the majority of learners said that they would speak highly of their learning provider, either without being asked (30 per cent) or if somebody asked them (43 per cent). Just 6 per cent said that they would be critical of their provider.

75 Learners were most willing to speak highly of sixth form colleges and specialist or other providers, as shown in Table 2.

Figure 7: Advocating the provider

Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your college/provider in their capacity as a training provider?



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Table 2: Advocating the provider by provider type

| All | | Provider type | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| | | FE college | Sixth form college | Specialist or other provider |
| Base | (31,742) | (29,136) | (1,546) | (1,060) |
| | % | % | % | % |
| I would speak highly of the provider | 73 | 72 | 80 | 81 |
| I would be neutral | 19 | 20 | 15 | 13 |
| I would be critical | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 |

Note: the base was all respondents.

76 As with overall satisfaction, views were most negative among early leavers and those who had failed their course (15 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, of these individuals said that they would be critical). Again, views were most positive among those studying at a lower level (76 per cent of those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 said that they would speak highly of their provider).

77 Views were also more positive among those aged 25 or over (77 per cent said that they would speak highly of their provider), among female learners (where the figure was 74 per cent), and among those on an 'access to higher education (HE)' course (where the figure was 75 per cent). (These findings are related, as 'access to HE' courses tend to have an older, female-dominated learner profile.)

Early leavers

78 At the time of the interview, two learners in three (68 per cent) were still studying, while 23 per cent had completed their course and 8 per cent had left it early.

79 This survey is not designed to provide data on completion rates, which are monitored by the LSC's own analysis of the ILR database. The ILR analysis shows that the overall 'success rate' (the proportion of course starters who achieved their learning aim) for FE courses was 76 per cent in 2005/06 (LSC, 2007b).

80 We have already seen that overall satisfaction is strongly linked to an individual's learning status, with lower levels of satisfaction among early leavers. It is therefore important to understand the reasons for non-completion.

81 The reasons given for leaving courses early are shown in Table 3. Learners who left their course early can be divided into two groups. The first group left for reasons related to the course itself – either because they felt the course was not as expected or was not right for them, or because they had problems with the tutor or teaching. The second group left early because of external factors – family, work, health or other personal issues.

82 Respondents' answers are similar to those given in the recent survey of early leavers from FE and WBL courses (DfES, 2007b). That survey noted that, in comparison with WBL, 'the reasons for leaving FE were generally more disparate'.

83 As shown in Table 3, the main sub-group differences were by age. Those aged 16 to 18 were far more likely than other learners to say that they had left the course because it was not right for them, and less likely to say that they had left early because of other commitments (such as family or work) or health reasons.

84 Personal reasons (such as bereavement or the illness of a family member) were mentioned most frequently by older learners, particularly women (the figure was 16 per cent among women aged 25 or over).

Table 3: Reasons for leaving the course early, by age

| | All | Age | | |
|--|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| | | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ |
| <i>Base</i> | <i>(2,528)</i> | <i>(958)</i> | <i>(400)</i> | <i>(1,149)</i> |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Wrong course for me | 19 | 37 | 18 | 11 |
| Tutor poor/problems with teaching quality | 13 | 14 | 12 | 13 |
| Personal issues (illness of family member/bereavement) | 11 | 7 | 8 | 14 |
| Difficult to combine with work commitments | 11 | 3 | 14 | 15 |
| Health reasons | 10 | 5 | 13 | 13 |
| Difficult to combine with family or other commitments | 9 | 4 | 9 | 12 |
| College/provider badly run/organised | 6 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Got a job | 6 | 9 | 8 | 3 |

Note: the table shows answers given by more than 5% of respondents. The base was learners who left their course early.



85 Those studying for a qualification at Level 3 or above were more likely than other learners to say that they had left their course because it had not been right for them (the figure was 23 per cent for those studying at Level 3, and 30 per cent for those studying at either Level 4 or Level 5).

86 In the case of Level 3, this is linked to the higher proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds studying at this level. Otherwise, reasons were similar across the different levels studied.

87 Family or other commitments were more likely to be given as a reason for leaving early by black and Asian learners (the figure was 16 per cent in each case, compared with 9 per cent overall).

88 In terms of subject areas, those studying the visual and performing arts and media were most likely to say that their course was wrong for them (29 per cent). Again, this is linked to the younger age profile of those who tend to study these subjects.

89 Students of hairdressing and beauty therapy were most likely to say that they had left their course because of tutor problems or poor teaching quality (21 per cent). Students of engineering, technology and manufacturing, and of business administration, management and professional courses were most likely to have left because they got a job (12 per cent in each case).

90 The most common reason for dissatisfaction with the overall learning experience among early leavers was that the course was not as expected (the figure was 33 per cent). This emphasises the perceptions of the high proportion of respondents who said that they had left early because their course was not right for them. This also suggests that pre-entry information and guidance (discussed in detail later in the report) is particularly important in reducing the drop-out rate.

91 Early leavers were less positive than other learners in their attitudes towards the course and learning provider more generally. Nevertheless, two in three (67 per cent) were at least fairly satisfied with their learning experience, and just over half (55 per cent) said that they would speak highly of their course provider. This suggests that external issues are often the reason for early learners leaving a course because although they were less positive than other respondents on these issues, many of them remain positive about their course and learning provider.



Satisfaction with the Teaching and the Provider

92 In this section, the course itself is examined in detail, in terms of teaching and course content. The section also looks at the level of consultation provided and at how learners feel they are treated by their provider.

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training

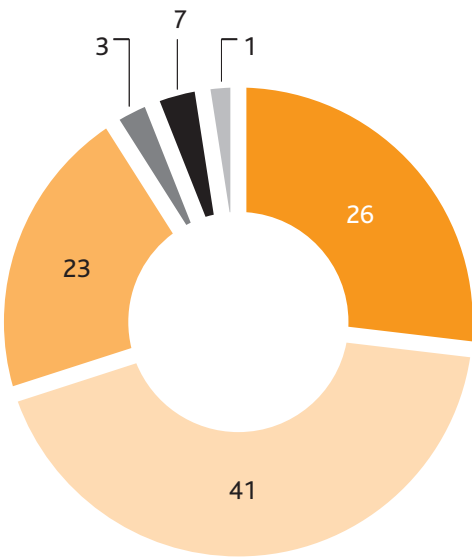
93 Figure 8 shows learners' attitudes to the quality of teaching or training on their course. Views are generally very positive, and answers correspond closely to overall satisfaction with the learning experience. This confirms the strong influence of teaching quality on overall satisfaction, as was noted in the previous section.

94 These findings are very similar to those obtained in 2004/05, as Figure 9 shows.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training

How satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training at your college/provider?

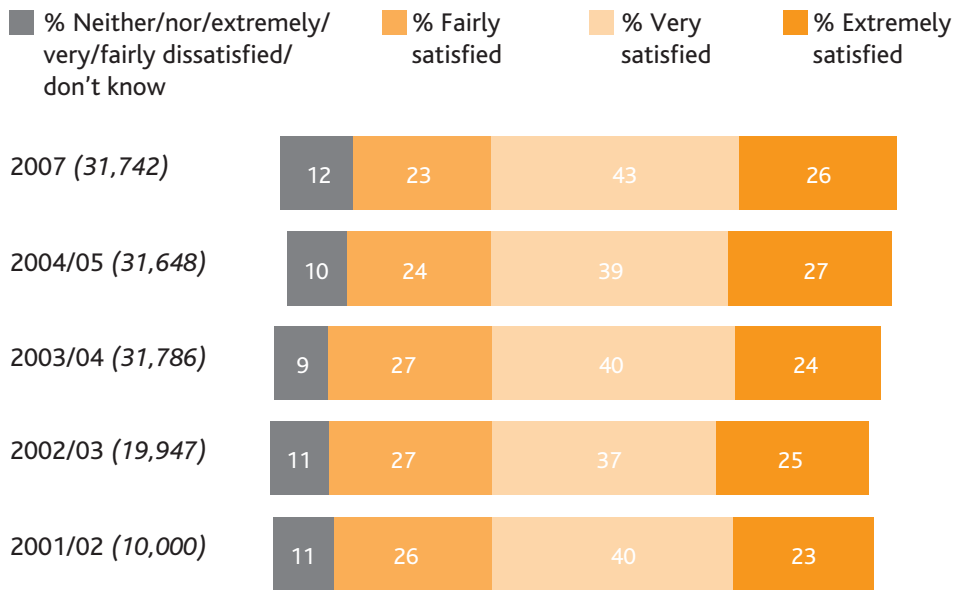
- % Extremely satisfied
- % Very satisfied
- % Fairly satisfied
- % Neither/nor
- % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied
- % Don't know



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



Figure 9: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training over time



Note: the base is shown in brackets for each year.

95 As with overall satisfaction with the learning experience, the main difference in satisfaction with teaching was in terms of completion status, with early leavers and those who had failed the course more negative (Table 4).

96 Similarly, early leavers gave less positive ratings for the specific aspects of teaching (listed in Figure 10), although a relatively high proportion (55 per cent) still gave a high rating (9 or 10 out of 10) for the tutor's knowledge of the subject.

Table 4: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training, by completion status

| All | | Completion status | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| | | Completed | Still studying | Early leaver | Failed |
| Base | (31,742) | (6,597) | (22,317) | (2,528) | (149) |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Extremely satisfied | 26 | 29 | 26 | 17 | 14 |
| Very satisfied | 41 | 42 | 42 | 31 | 18 |
| Fairly satisfied | 23 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 36 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 10 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 4 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 8 |
| Very dissatisfied | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 9 |
| Extremely dissatisfied | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| Don't know | 1 | 1 | * | 1 | 3 |
| Net satisfaction | +82 | +86 | +85 | +50 | +47 |

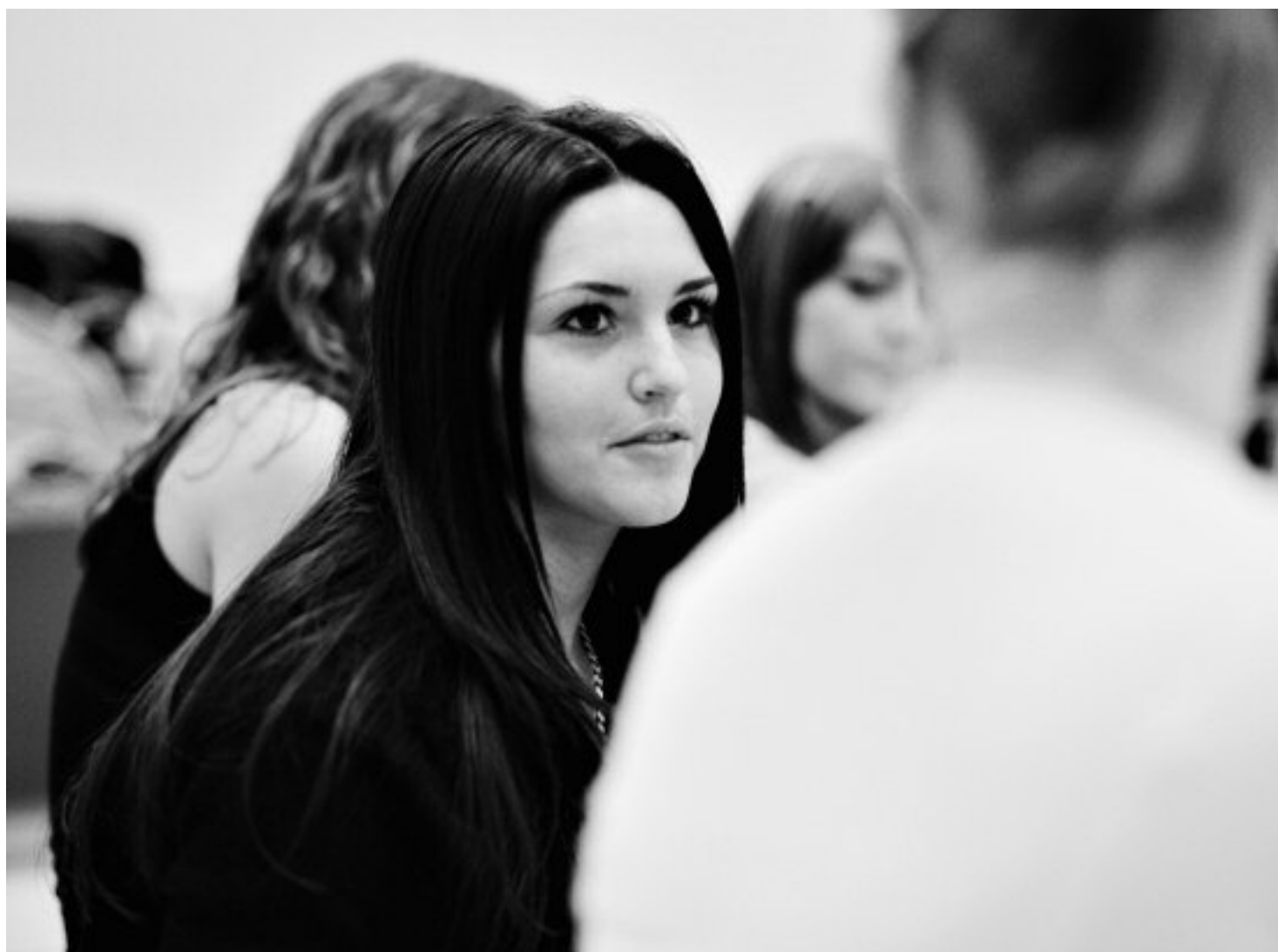
Note: the base was all respondents. An asterisk denotes values that are above zero but less than 0.5%.

97 Once again, satisfaction was higher among those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 (+84 net satisfied, falling to +79 among those studying at Level 4 or Level 5).

98 Analysis by age group shows that net satisfaction was higher among 16- to 18-year-olds (+85), but those aged 25 or over were most likely to be extremely satisfied (29 per cent). Net satisfaction was also higher in sixth form colleges than in other types of provider (+88).

99 Attitudes to the quality of teaching were most positive among learners studying English, languages and communication, or hospitality, sports, leisure and travel courses. Views were least positive among learners studying hairdressing and beauty therapy.

100 There was no difference by ethnicity in terms of net satisfaction, but white learners were more likely to be extremely satisfied (26 per cent, compared with 21 per cent of those in ethnic minority groups). This again mirrors the findings on overall satisfaction with the learning experience.



Views on teaching staff

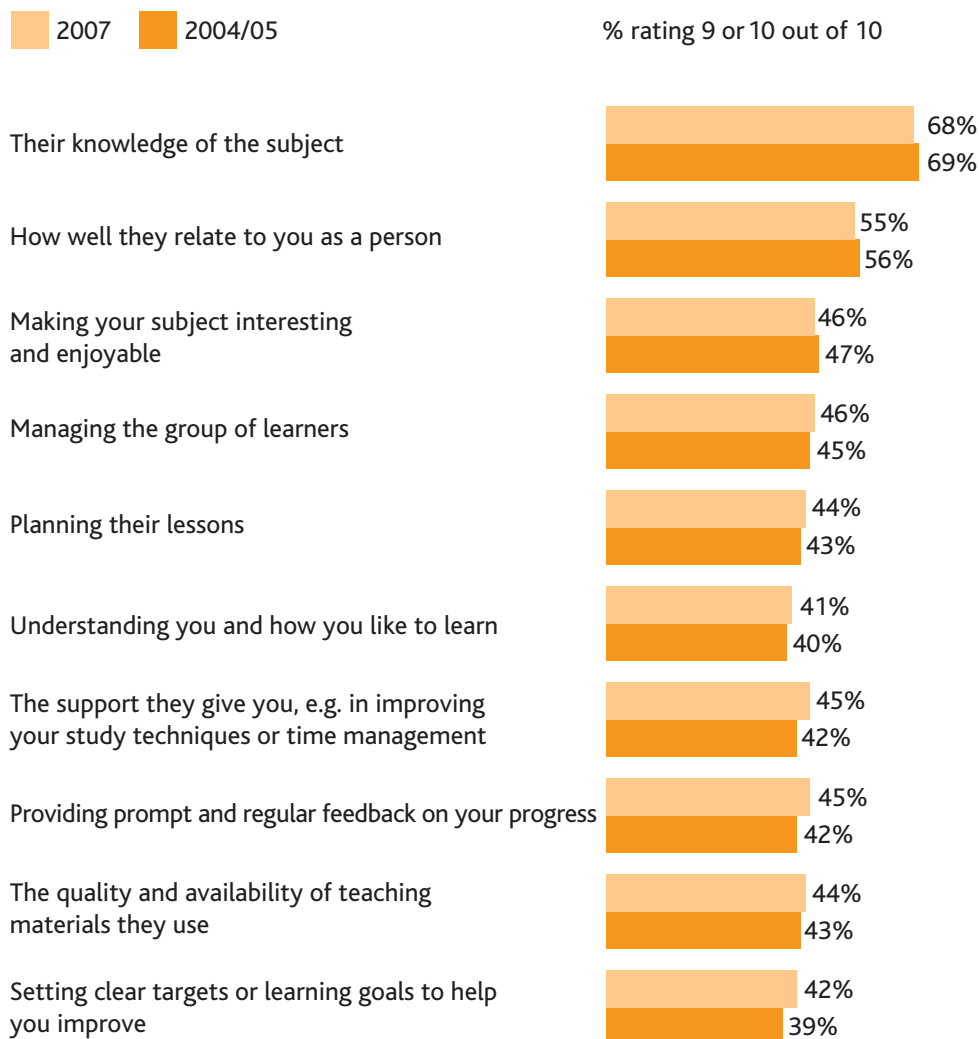
101 We now look at more detailed issues concerning teaching staff. Respondents were asked to rate various items on a scale of 1 (representing 'very poor') to 10 ('excellent'). As in previous years, the analysis in this report focuses on the proportions who gave a 9 or 10 rating for each item.

102 Learners were positive about all the various aspects of their tutors' performance, with the highest ratings given for knowledge of the subject and for how well the tutor related to the respondent as a person. As Figure 10 demonstrates, these results show very little change from 2004/05.

103 As well as the differences by completion status noted earlier in the report, there were some consistent sub-group variations across the measures.

Figure 10: Views on teaching staff over time

How would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training?



Note: the base was 31,508 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 31,648 FE learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

104 Table 5 shows differences by level of qualification studied. This indicates that, as with overall satisfaction, views became less positive as the level increased. This pattern is most pronounced when it comes to making the subject interesting and enjoyable – one of the key drivers of overall satisfaction identified earlier in the report. The difference was less extreme in relation to knowledge of the subject.

105 Related to this variation by level of study, learners with no prior qualifications tended to be more positive than other learners about the various items.

106 Views were also more positive among women than among men, and became more positive as age increased (Table 6). However, this age pattern was less pronounced for the following items: support given, quality and availability of teaching materials, and setting clear targets or learning goals.

Table 5: Views on teaching staff, by level of study

| | All | Level of study | | |
|---|----------|-----------------------|---------|-------------------|
| | | Entry Level & Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 or higher |
| <i>Base</i> | (31,742) | (6,010) | (9,585) | (14,810) |
| % rating 9 or 10 out of 10 | % | % | % | % |
| Their knowledge of the subject | 68 | 71 | 69 | 66 |
| How well they relate to you as a person | 55 | 62 | 58 | 49 |
| Making your subject interesting and enjoyable | 46 | 55 | 49 | 38 |
| Managing the group of learners | 46 | 53 | 48 | 39 |
| Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress | 45 | 49 | 48 | 40 |
| The support they give you, e.g. in improving your study techniques or time management | 45 | 51 | 48 | 41 |
| Planning their lessons | 44 | 51 | 46 | 39 |
| The quality and availability of teaching materials they use | 44 | 51 | 45 | 40 |
| Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve | 42 | 47 | 45 | 37 |
| Understanding you and how you like to learn | 41 | 48 | 45 | 35 |

Note: the base was all respondents asked the question; table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers.

Table 6: Views on teaching staff, by gender and age

| | All | Male | | | Female | | |
|--|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ |
| <i>Base</i> | (31,742) | (6,399) | (2,429) | (4,213) | (6,334) | (2,357) | (9,799) |
| % rating 9 or 10 out of 10 | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Their knowledge of the subject | 68 | 63 | 63 | 71 | 66 | 66 | 72 |
| How well they relate to you as a person | 55 | 44 | 45 | 59 | 48 | 51 | 63 |
| Making your subject interesting and enjoyable | 46 | 36 | 34 | 48 | 40 | 44 | 54 |
| Managing the group of learners | 46 | 35 | 34 | 49 | 42 | 44 | 53 |
| Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress | 45 | 40 | 35 | 44 | 46 | 43 | 49 |
| The support they give you, for example in improving your study techniques or time management | 45 | 41 | 38 | 43 | 47 | 45 | 49 |
| Planning their lessons | 44 | 38 | 33 | 43 | 44 | 43 | 50 |
| The quality and availability of teaching materials they use | 44 | 42 | 38 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 47 |
| Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve | 42 | 37 | 33 | 40 | 43 | 43 | 46 |
| Understanding you and how you like to learn | 41 | 32 | 32 | 41 | 38 | 43 | 48 |

Note: the base was all respondents asked the question; table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers.

107 In addition, those studying for a national vocational qualification (NVQ) were more positive than other learners on a number of the more 'personal' measures (e.g. relating to and understanding the learner); this is linked to the findings on gender and age, as NVQ students have an older, more female-dominated profile. Students studying for a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) were more positive than other learners about the support given and the planning of lessons. Learners studying at sixth form colleges were more positive about the quality and availability of teaching materials, but less positive than other learners about how tutors relate to and understand them.

108 By subject, views were most positive among those studying English, languages and communication, information and communication technology, retailing, customer service and transportation, health, social care and public services, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. These reflect demographic variations: all have an older age profile, apart from hairdressing and beauty therapy, which is studied predominantly by female learners. Views were less positive among learners studying construction and engineering, technology and manufacturing (both male-dominated), and business administration, management and professional courses (mostly studied at a higher level).

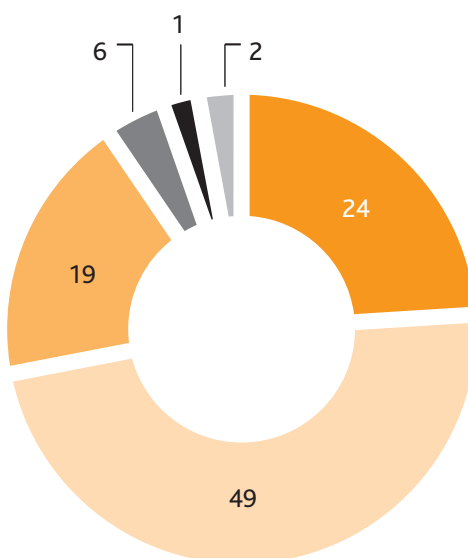
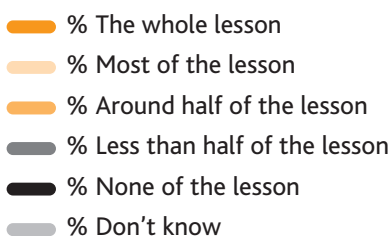
109 In addition, white and black African learners tended to be more positive than other respondents on the various measures.

Time utilisation

110 One learner in four (24 per cent) said that the whole lesson was spent in increasing or helping to increase their knowledge or understanding of the course, while a further half (49 per cent) said that most of the lesson was spent doing this. Details are shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Time spent increasing knowledge in a typical lesson

In a typical lesson or training session, how much time is spent on increasing or helping to increase your knowledge or understanding of your course?



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

111 Learners who said that the whole lesson was spent in increasing or helping to increase their knowledge or understanding of the course were more likely to be studying at Entry Level or Level 1 (30 per cent); the figure fell to 25 per cent among those studying at Level 2, and 19 per cent among those studying at Level 3 or above. The figure was also higher among older learners (30 per cent of those aged 25 or over) and among women (26 per cent, compared with 20 per cent of men).

112 Variations by subject reflect these patterns: those studying English, languages and communication were the most likely to say that they spent the whole lesson in this way (this subject area tends to be studied by older people and at lower levels).

113 Figure 12 shows the prevalence of various situations in class, as reported by learners. Three in five (60 per cent) said that other students arrived at least five minutes late on a fairly regular basis. The other situations were less common, but each was mentioned by at least 12 per cent of learners. The findings were similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey, although the proportions reporting the two most common situations (other students arriving late and making a noise/disrupting the class) were higher than in previous years.

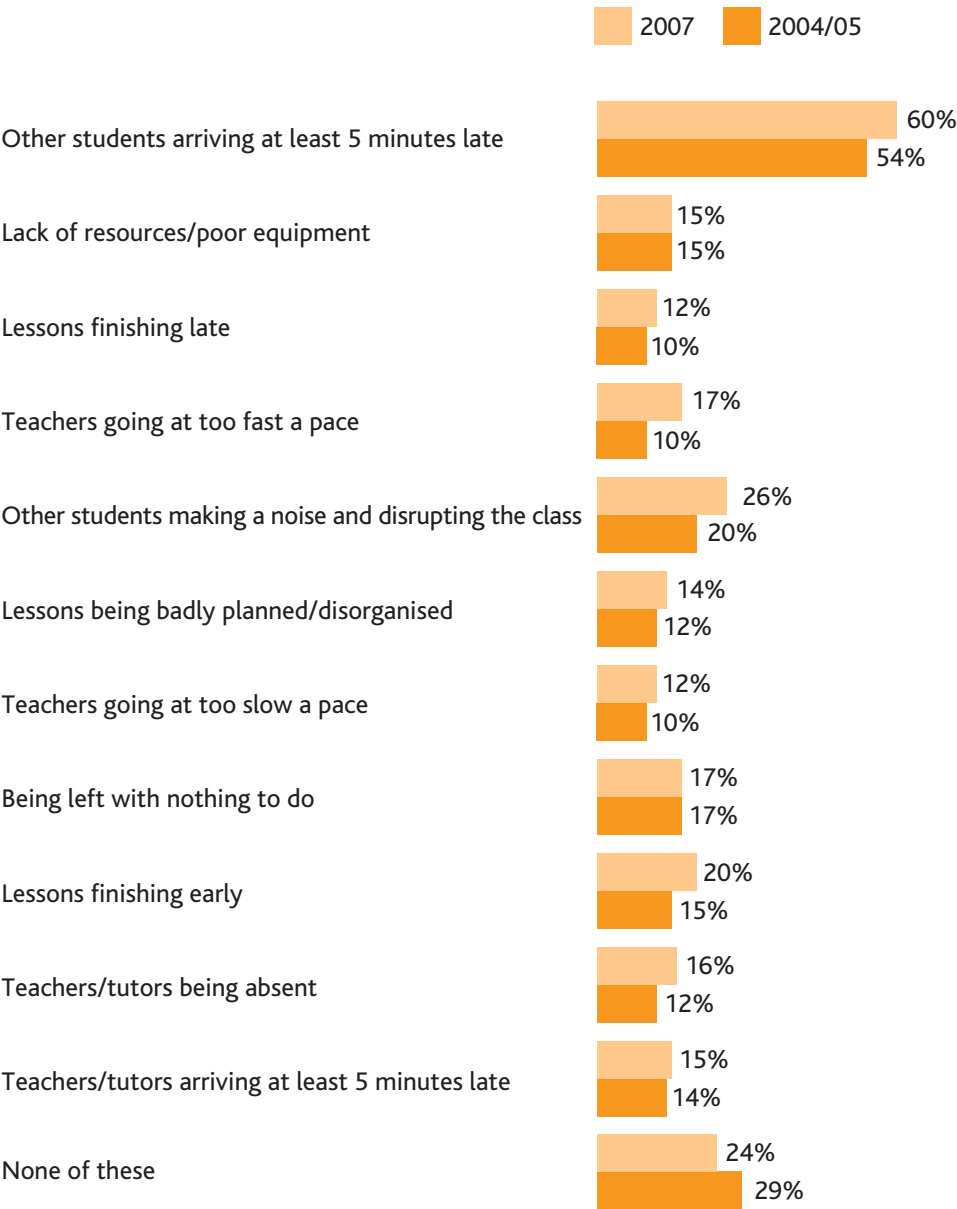
114 The various situations were reported most frequently by learners aged 16 to 18, followed by 19- to 24-year-olds; learners aged 25 or over were less likely to say that these situations happened regularly.

115 Other sub-group findings are linked to this age pattern. The various situations were reported most frequently by those studying at Level 3 or above (but often with prior attainment at Level 2 or below) and those studying at sixth form colleges – both features of 16- to 18-year-old learners.

116 Subjects with a high incidence of these situations were those taken by a high proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds; those studying hairdressing and beauty therapy were the most likely to mention the various items.

Figure 12: Issues affecting the learning programme over time

Which of the following situations have you encountered on a fairly regular basis?



Note: the base was 31,508 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007) and 31,648 FE learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

Fairness and respect

117 The vast majority of learners said that they were treated fairly (95 per cent in agreement and +90 net agree) and with respect (95 per cent in agreement and net agree score of +93) by their training provider (Figure 13).

118 While all learners were positive about these issues, older learners aged 25 or over were particularly positive (net agree score of +95 for being treated with respect and +93 for being treated fairly).

119 Views were most positive among those studying information and communication technology, or English, languages and communication, and those on foundation programmes; and they were least positive among those studying hairdressing and beauty therapy (net agree score of +87 for being treated with respect and +83 for being treated fairly). These differences by subject tended to reflect the age profile of learners.

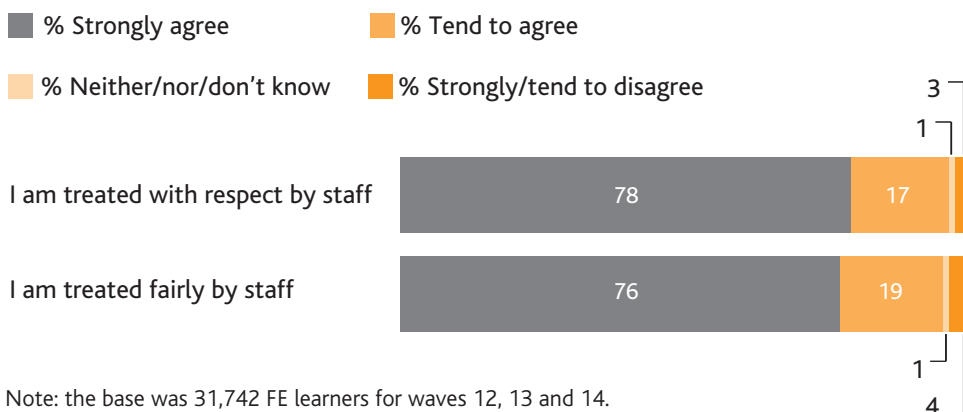
120 Learners who had left their course early and those who had failed were less positive than other respondents, but were still likely to agree that they were treated with respect (net scores of +83 and +86, respectively) and treated fairly (+78 and +75, respectively).

Consultation with learners

121 Table 7 shows learners' views on the level of consultation on different issues. While the majority agreed that they were asked for their views on the four items, at least one respondent in four disagreed. The figure was highest for views on the college (e.g. canteen, building, rooms): 37 per cent disagreed that they were asked for their views on this. While these results are not indicative of the importance learners attach to being asked for their views on these issues, they do suggest that there is scope for greater consultation with learners.

Figure 13: Fairness and respect

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

122 Table 7 also shows that views were more positive among younger learners, and that this pattern was particularly strong in relation to facilities and the college. In addition, men tended to be more positive than women about the four items.

123 The difference by age contrasts with findings on other issues (quality of teaching, time utilisation, fairness and respect), in which older learners were more positive than the younger ones.

Table 7: Level of consultation, by age

| All | | Age | | |
|---|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| | | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ |
| Base | (31,742) | (12,733) | (4,786) | (14,012) |
| Net agree score (+/-) | % | % | % | % |
| My college/provider asks for my views on: | | | | |
| the quality of the learning programme | +44 | +56 | +50 | +36 |
| ways to improve the learning programme | +32 | +51 | +41 | +19 |
| the facilities | +24 | +45 | +33 | +9 |
| the college (e.g. canteen, building, rooms) | +13 | +37 | +23 | -3 |

Note: the base was all respondents.

124 Reflecting the age pattern, views were also more positive among those studying at Level 3 or above and/or those with a prior qualification attainment below Level 3. Asian and black African respondents were more positive than those from other ethnic groups.

125 Looking at the different types of learning provider, views were most positive among those at specialist or other providers and at sixth form colleges (this is linked to the younger age profile of learners in sixth form colleges).

126 Learners who had left their course early were as likely to disagree as to agree that they had been consulted on the various issues. Although early leavers were consistently more negative throughout the survey, their views on consultation were particularly negative.

Responsiveness to learners

127 Respondents who agreed that they had been consulted on at least one of the items covered in Table 7 (82 per cent of the total sample) were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the provider had responded to their views.

128 As Table 8 shows, 71 per cent agreed that the provider had responded to their views, while 14 per cent disagreed.

129 Once again, views were most positive among those at specialist or other providers and sixth form colleges, and were also more positive among younger learners (+63 net agree among 16- to 18-year-olds, falling to +57 of 18- to 24-year-olds and +53 of those aged 25 or over). Men were also more positive than women (+60 net agree, compared with +55).

Table 8: Whether learning provider responds to learners' views, by provider type

| All | | Provider type | | |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| | | General FE college | Sixth form college | Specialist or other provider |
| Base | (25,907) | (12,733) | (4,786) | (14,012) |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly agree | 33 | 33 | 31 | 31 |
| Tend to agree | 38 | 38 | 45 | 41 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 6 | 6 | 6 | 8 |
| Tend to disagree | 10 | 10 | 12 | 8 |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Don't know | 8 | 8 | 4 | 11 |
| Net agree score | +57 | +56 | +62 | +62 |

Note: the base was all respondents who were consulted.

130 On this question, respondents studying at Level 2 or below were more positive than other learners (+60 net agree), while those studying at Level 4 or Level 5 were the least positive (+51 net agree).

131 Analysis by ethnic origin shows that, within the Asian group, Indian respondents were more positive than Pakistani or Bangladeshi respondents (+63 net agree, compared with +52), while black African learners were more positive than black Caribbean learners (+58, compared with +49).

132 Although early leavers were less likely to feel that they had been consulted in the first place, those that did were mostly positive about their provider's responsiveness (+39 net agree).





Pre-entry Information, Advice and Guidance

133 This section considers the reasons for choosing a course and a learning provider, and also examines the information given to learners at enrolment.

Reasons for choosing a course

134 Learners gave a variety of reasons for choosing their course. As Table 9 shows, the most common motivation was job related: to help them to get a job, to move to a different or better job, or to gain promotion.

135 Reasons varied by age group. Table 9 shows that 16- to 18-year-olds were more likely than other age groups to have chosen the course because they liked the subject or to move on in education. Those aged 19 to 24 were more likely than other respondents to have chosen the course to get a (new) job or promotion, or to gain a qualification. For learners aged 25 or over, the course was more likely to have been to advance their skills and knowledge in the area, for personal interest, or because of relevance to their job.

136 The choice of course also varied by level studied, as Table 10 shows. Those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were more likely than other learners to say that they had chosen the course to advance their skills and knowledge in the area and for personal interest.

137 Respondents studying at Level 2 or above were more likely to give work-related reasons. To a large extent, these findings reflect the proportions of learners doing the course as part of their job. As is noted in a later section of this report (paragraph 213), around half of learners said that their course was essential either for their current job or for a future job, and this proportion was higher among those studying at Level 2 and above.

Table 9: Reasons for choosing a course, by age

| All | | Age | | |
|---|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ |
| Base | (10,593) | (4,606) | (1,455) | (4,459) |
| | % | % | % | % |
| To help me get a job/ promotion/better job/ different job | 36 | 39 | 44 | 32 |
| Because I liked the subject | 25 | 40 | 22 | 14 |
| For my own personal interest | 25 | 24 | 20 | 28 |
| To advance my skills and knowledge in this area | 16 | 6 | 11 | 24 |
| It was relevant to my job | 12 | 4 | 12 | 18 |
| To gain qualifications | 12 | 10 | 16 | 12 |
| To help me move on in education | 11 | 16 | 12 | 7 |

Note: the base was all wave 12 respondents. The table shows answers given by more than 5% of respondents.

138 In addition, those studying at Level 3 were more likely than other respondents to have chosen the course because they liked the subject or to help them move on in education (this reflects the younger age profile of people studying at Level 3).

Table 10: Reasons for choosing a course, by level of study

| All | | Level of study | | | |
|--|----------|-----------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| | | Entry Level & Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 & 5 |
| Base | (10,593) | (2,120) | (3,118) | (3,607) | (1,242) |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| To help me get a job/ promotion/ better job/ different job | 36 | 28 | 40 | 39 | 44 |
| Because I liked the subject | 25 | 21 | 19 | 32 | 24 |
| For my own personal interest | 25 | 32 | 23 | 23 | 19 |
| To advance my skills and knowledge in this area | 16 | 25 | 16 | 10 | 11 |
| It was relevant to my job | 12 | 9 | 14 | 10 | 17 |
| To gain qualifications | 12 | 10 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| To help me move on in education | 11 | 7 | 9 | 17 | 8 |

Note: the base was all wave 12 respondents. The table shows answers given by more than 5% of respondents.

139 There were some large sub-group differences on this question – not only by age and by level of course, but also by other factors. Together, these provide a picture of the types of learners giving the various reasons for choosing a course.

- **To help get a job or promotion, or to get a better or different job:** this was mentioned most frequently by people studying for a qualification at Level 2 or above, and with prior attainment below Level 3. In particular, this was mentioned by people studying for an NVQ or another qualification in a vocational subject. It was mentioned most frequently by those aged 19 to 24 and in the black African ethnic group.
- **It was relevant to my job:** again this was most likely to be mentioned by people studying a vocational subject, most commonly at Level 2 or Level 4. In this instance, however, it was more likely to be mentioned by older respondents (25 or over), by those with a high prior attainment (Level 3 or above) and by white learners.

- **Because I liked the subject:** this was mentioned most frequently by those aged 16 to 18, often at a sixth form college, studying for A-levels or other Level 3 qualifications. This was more likely to be mentioned by those studying visual and performing arts and media, hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and humanities (all of these subjects are studied by a relatively large proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds).
- **For my own personal interest:** this was mentioned most frequently by those studying at a specialist or other provider and by those taking a course at Entry Level or Level 1. Previous research has shown that this tends to be a reason given by those studying at a low level but with a higher prior attainment (as opposed to those who are already qualified to a lower level) (DfES, 2006).

- **To advance my skills and knowledge in this area:** this was more likely to be a motivation for people without prior qualifications, studying at Entry Level or Level 1, for older people (aged 25 and over) and for black Caribbean learners. Typical course subjects were information and communication technology, and English, languages and communication. Although not explicit in the analysis, these findings indicate that this reason will include a relatively large proportion of Skills for Life learners.
- **To gain qualifications:** there were fewer sub-group differences here, but this was mentioned most frequently by those studying at Level 4 or Level 5, and by those on an 'access to HE' course. It was also more frequently mentioned by Pakistani or Bangladeshi learners.
- **To help me move on in education:** this was more likely to be an issue for 16- to 18-year-olds studying for A-levels or other Level 3 qualifications, as well as for those studying for GCSEs and on 'access to HE' courses. This reason was mentioned most frequently by Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black African learners, and by those studying sciences and mathematics, or humanities (which both have a young age profile), or by those on foundation programmes.

140 Early leavers were very similar to other respondents in terms of their reasons for choosing a course, and their choice of learning provider (discussed next).

Reasons for choosing a provider

141 As in previous years, the most common reason for choosing a particular learning provider was the convenience of the location (mentioned by 57 per cent). Two other factors were mentioned by around one learner in six: that the provider offered the course the respondent wanted, and that it had the best general reputation.

142 Table 11 shows that reasons varied according to the level of study. The location was mentioned most frequently by those studying at Entry Level or Level 1, while the course itself was mentioned more by people studying at Level 4 or Level 5 than by those studying at other levels. The reputation of the provider was more of a concern to learners studying at Level 3 than to those studying at other levels.

143 The variations by level of study are related to age differences: older respondents (often studying at lower levels) were the most likely to mention location (60 per cent of those aged 25 or over), while 16- to 18-year-olds (many of whom study at Level 3) were most likely to mention the provider's reputation (27 per cent). Linked to this, the provider's reputation was also more likely to be mentioned by those studying at a sixth form college.

144 In terms of course subject:

- location was mentioned most frequently by those studying information and communication technology, and English, languages and communication (both with an older profile and often studied at Level 1 or below), and also hairdressing and beauty therapy;
- having the course the learner wanted was most likely to be mentioned by those studying land-based provision (25 per cent mention) and visual and performing arts and media (21 per cent mention); and
- those studying visual and performing arts and media, humanities, and sciences or mathematics were the most likely to say that they had chosen the provider with the best reputation (all of these subjects have a high proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds studying at Level 3).

Table 11: Reasons for choosing a learning provider, by level of study

| All | | Level of study | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| | | Entry Level & Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 & 5 |
| Base | (10,593) | (2,120) | (3,118) | (3,607) | (1,242) |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Convenient/nearest location | 57 | 61 | 58 | 54 | 59 |
| Offered course I wanted | 16 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 23 |
| Has best (general) reputation | 16 | 11 | 10 | 25 | 14 |

Note: the base was all wave 12 respondents. The table shows the top three answers only.

145 Analysis by ethnic origin shows that location was more likely to be mentioned by Pakistani or Bangladeshi learners, while the provider's reputation was mentioned most frequently by Indian and black African respondents. Black respondents (both black African and black Caribbean) were more likely than other learners to say that they had chosen the provider because it offered the course they wanted.



Information about the course at enrolment

146 Learners mostly said that they had been well informed about various aspects of their course before they enrolled, and this applied in particular to the content of the course and the standard of work expected. Details are shown in Table 12.

147 There was a consistent pattern of men being more positive than women about the various items, while older learners (aged 25 or over) were more likely than younger respondents to say that they had been less well informed before enrolment. This follows the general pattern, noted in paragraphs 122 to 123, whereby women and older learners were less positive about communication and consultation, despite being more positive about other aspects of the course. Details are shown in Table 12.

148 Those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were less likely to say that they had been well informed about their course before enrolment. In addition, those studying for an NVQ were more positive than other learners about all the items, as were those with a prior attainment of Level 2 or below.

149 Asian (and in particular Pakistani or Bangladeshi) learners were more likely to say that they had been well informed about the various issues, while black Caribbean learners were more likely than average to say that they had been well informed about the course content and how the teacher would teach the course.

150 As expected, those studying vocational subjects were more likely to say that they had been well informed about how the course would help them gain skills to use in a job. In addition, those studying sciences or mathematics, health, social care and public services courses, engineering, technology and manufacturing, and construction were more likely to have felt well informed about a number of the other items. By contrast, those studying English, languages and communication were less likely to have felt well informed (in particular about the amount and standard of work required).

Table 12: Information provision at the time of enrolment, by gender and age

| All | | Gender | | Age | | |
|--|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | Male | Female | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ |
| Base | (10,593) | (4,422) | (6,171) | (4,606) | (1,455) | (4,459) |
| Net agree score (+/-) | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| The content of the course, what subjects you would cover | +79 | +82 | +76 | +83 | +80 | +75 |
| The standard of work expected | +76 | +80 | +73 | +85 | +79 | +68 |
| The amount of work expected of you in your own time | +67 | +73 | +63 | +72 | +72 | +62 |
| The type of assessments that you would be given | +67 | +72 | +64 | +74 | +71 | +61 |
| How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures) | +64 | +69 | +61 | +66 | +66 | +62 |
| How the course/ training would help you gain skills to use in a job | +63 | +69 | +60 | +72 | +70 | +55 |
| The timing of assessments | +57 | +62 | +53 | +58 | +62 | +54 |

Note: the base was all wave 12 respondents.

151 Early leavers were less likely than other respondents to say that they had been well informed before enrolment, and this was consistent across the various items.

Learner Support

152 This section focuses on the support learners had during the course, and specifically on the information, help and advice they received. It also provides an examination of the problems encountered by learners and how they were dealt with, as well as complaints made by learners.

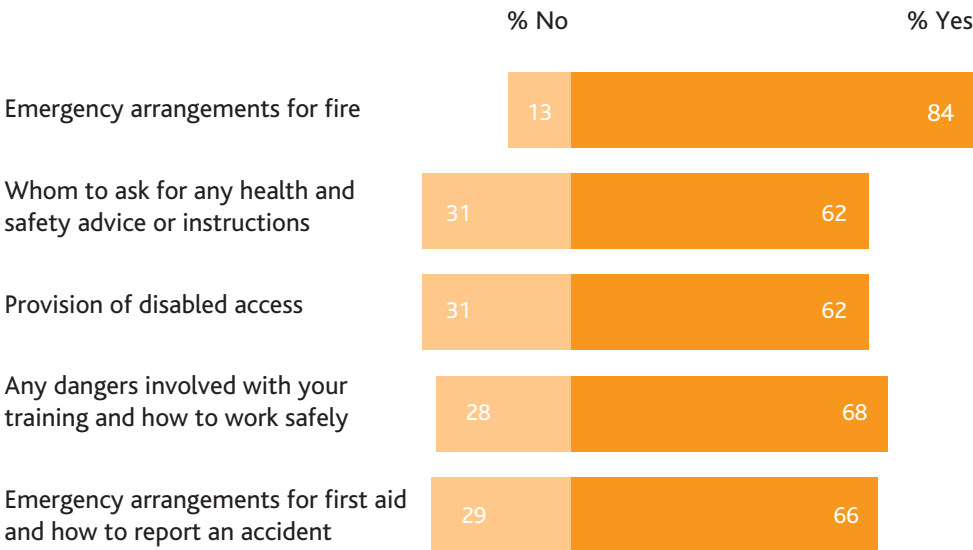
Health and safety information

153 Learners were asked whether their learning provider had informed them about a number of health and safety issues, as listed in Figure 14. At least three learners in five recalled being informed about each of the various issues, and this was highest for emergency fire arrangements (84 per cent).

154 It is important to bear in mind that these findings will be subject to respondents' recall of events, and it is therefore not surprising that learners who were still studying at the time of the interview were more likely to say that they had been informed about the various issues than those who had left or completed the course (for example, 86 per cent of those still studying said they had been informed about emergency arrangements for fire, compared with 80 per cent of course completers and 77 per cent of those who had left the course early).

Figure 14: Information provision on health and safety

Which of the following did your college/provider inform you about?



Note: the base was 10,561 FE learners for wave 13.

155 Recall of health and safety information was consistently higher among men and 16- to 18-year-olds. It was also higher among those studying vocational subjects, specifically construction, as well as engineering, technology and manufacturing, hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and land-based provision. These subjects all have a younger and/or male-dominated learner profile.

Information provision after induction

156 In the previous section, we examined the extent to which learners had been informed about their course before enrolment. We now look at the same items and see how well informed learners said they were after their induction. Table 13 shows that learners generally felt well informed about all the various aspects of their course. As one would expect, these figures are higher than for the level of information **before** enrolment (the 'net informed' scores show an increase of between 6 and 15 percentage points); the largest increase is for the timing of assessments.

157 The sub-group variations show a slightly different pattern, compared to the position before enrolment. On this question, there was generally less variation among the different sub-groups. Where differences do occur, it is those studying at lower levels who felt less well informed, as Table 13 shows. Linked to this, those with no prior qualifications were more likely to say that they were less well informed than were other respondents.

158 More specifically, those studying for NVQs and A-levels tended to feel better informed than other learners, and this was also true of those on an 'access to HE' course (specifically in relation to the course content and amount of work required).

159 In general, men tended to feel better informed than women, but there was no consistent pattern by age, ethnicity or course subject.

Table 13: Information provision after induction, by level of study

| All | | Level of study | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | Entry Level & Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 & 5 |
| <i>Base</i> | <i>(10,561)</i> | <i>(1,905)</i> | <i>(3,223)</i> | <i>(3,684)</i> | <i>(1,230)</i> |
| Net agree score (+/-) | % | % | % | % | % |
| The content of the course, what subjects you would cover | +85 | +83 | +86 | +87 | +83 |
| The standard of work expected | +84 | +81 | +84 | +86 | +83 |
| The type of assessments that you would be given | +79 | +76 | +82 | +81 | +81 |
| How the teacher/trainer would teach the course (e.g. group work or lectures) | +77 | +76 | +77 | +76 | +80 |
| The amount of work expected of you in your own time | +76 | +74 | +77 | +76 | +78 |
| The timing of assessments | +72 | +69 | +75 | +73 | +70 |
| How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job | +71 | +63 | +76 | +73 | +76 |

Note: the base was all wave 12 respondents.

160 Early leavers said that they had felt well informed about the content of the course (+81 net informed), but less well informed about other details, in particular how the course would be taught (+52), the timing of assessments (+47) and how the course would help them gain skills to use in a job (+45). Early leavers were also less positive than other learners about the level of support that had been available to them and about how well different issues had been managed (these issues are covered below, at paragraph 166).

Support for learners

161 The vast majority of learners agreed that there was support available to help them carry out their learning programme: 91 per cent agreed with this statement and just 6 per cent disagreed.

162 While findings were consistently positive among all sub-groups, net agreement was highest among men (+87 net agree, compared with +83 for women), 16- to 18-year-olds (+90, compared with 84 per cent of 19- to 24-year-olds and 82 per cent of those aged 25 or over), those studying at Level 3 (+87) and, related to this, those in sixth form colleges (+92).

Types of support available

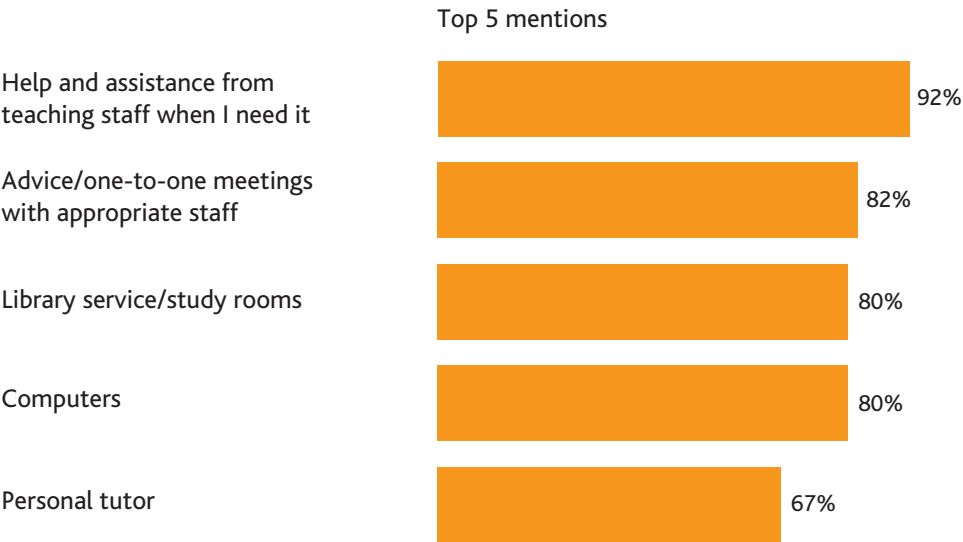
163 Learners were asked whether a number of types of support had been made available to them at their college or learning provider (findings are shown in Figure 15). Almost all respondents (92 per cent) said that they had help and assistance from teachers or tutors available when they needed it, and at least two in three said that they had each of the other types of support available to them.

164 Support was more likely to be available in sixth form colleges (at least 83 per cent for each of the items), and it increased along with the level of study, with those studying A-levels or on 'access to HE' courses the most likely to say that they had the various types of support available to them.

165 Related to this, younger learners were particularly likely to say that they had these forms of support available to them. The age differences were most pronounced for the availability of a personal tutor, computers and a library service or study rooms: 84 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds said that they had a personal tutor, falling to 55 per cent of learners aged 25 or over; while for both computers and a library service/study rooms, the range was from 95 per cent among 16- to 18-year-olds to 68 per cent among those aged 25 or over.

Figure 15: The types of support available

Which of the following types of support, if any, have been made available to you at your college/provider?



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



Management of issues affecting learners

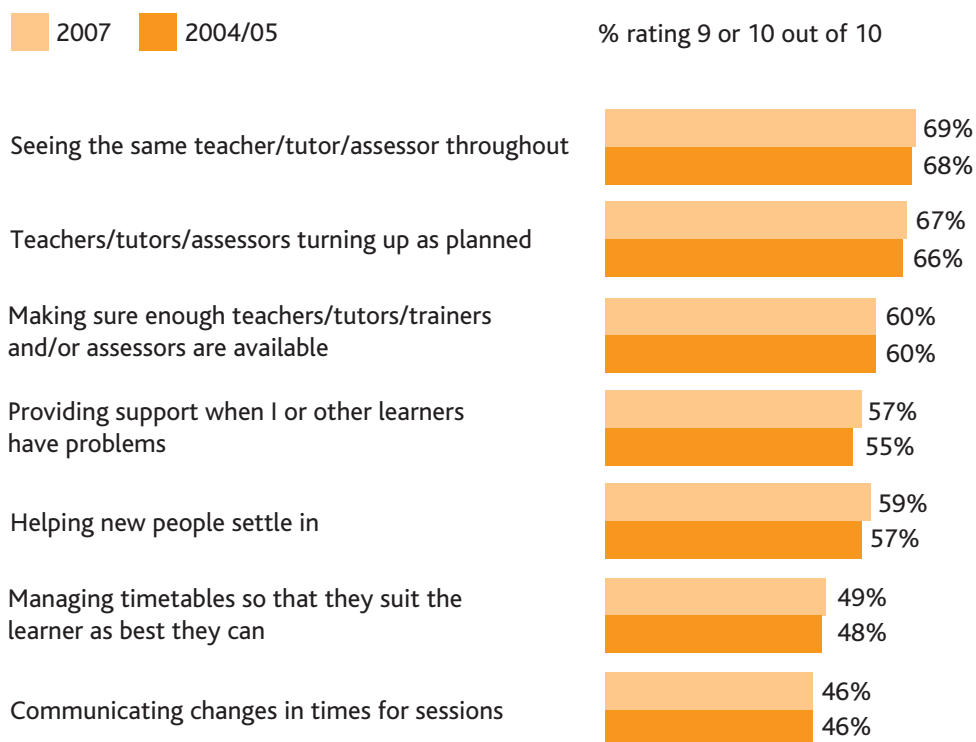
166 Learners were asked to rate the management of a number of issues related to their course, as illustrated in Figure 16; this shows the proportion giving each item a score of 9 or 10 out of 10.

167 Learners were generally positive about these issues, particularly about seeing the same teacher or tutor throughout and the teachers or tutors turning up as planned. Very few respondents gave scores of less than 5 for any of the items. Findings were consistent with the 2004/05 survey.



Figure 16: Management of issues affecting learners over time

How well do you think the following issues were managed?



Note: the base was 10,145 FE learners for wave 13 (2007) and 10,548 FE learners for wave 10 (2004/05).

168 There was a consistent variation according to the level of study, with views becoming less positive as the level of study increased (Table 14). Related to this, views were also consistently more positive among women than among men, and among older learners (25 and over) than among younger learners.

169 Other sub-group differences reflect the variations by age. In terms of ethnicity, white respondents were the most positive, while Asian learners (the group with the youngest age profile) were the least positive.

170 Similarly, those studying for NVQs (which have an older, female-dominated profile) were more positive than average, as were those studying information and communication, and English, languages and communication (both with an older profile and with courses at relatively low levels).

Problems encountered during the course

171 Three learners in five (60 per cent) said that they had experienced at least one of the problems listed in Figure 17. This covers a range of problems related both to the course itself and to external pressures that cause learners difficulty. Respondents were slightly more likely to say that they had had one of these problems than in 2004/05 (56 per cent).

Table 14: Management of issues affecting learners, by level of study

| All | | Level of study | | |
|--|----------|-----------------------|---------|-------------------|
| | | Entry Level & Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 or higher |
| Base | (10,561) | (1,804) | (3,070) | (4,837) |
| % rating as 9 or 10 out of 10 | % | % | % | % |
| Seeing the same teacher/tutor/assessor throughout | 69 | 74 | 70 | 66 |
| Teachers/tutors/assessors turning up as planned | 67 | 72 | 69 | 61 |
| Making sure enough teachers/tutors/trainers and/or assessors are available | 60 | 65 | 61 | 55 |
| Helping new people settle in | 59 | 67 | 60 | 53 |
| Providing support when I or other learners have problems | 57 | 63 | 58 | 53 |
| Managing timetables so that they suit the learner as best they can | 49 | 57 | 52 | 42 |
| Communicating changes in time for sessions | 46 | 54 | 49 | 39 |

Note: the base was all wave 13 respondents asked the question. Table percentages exclude 'don't know' answers.

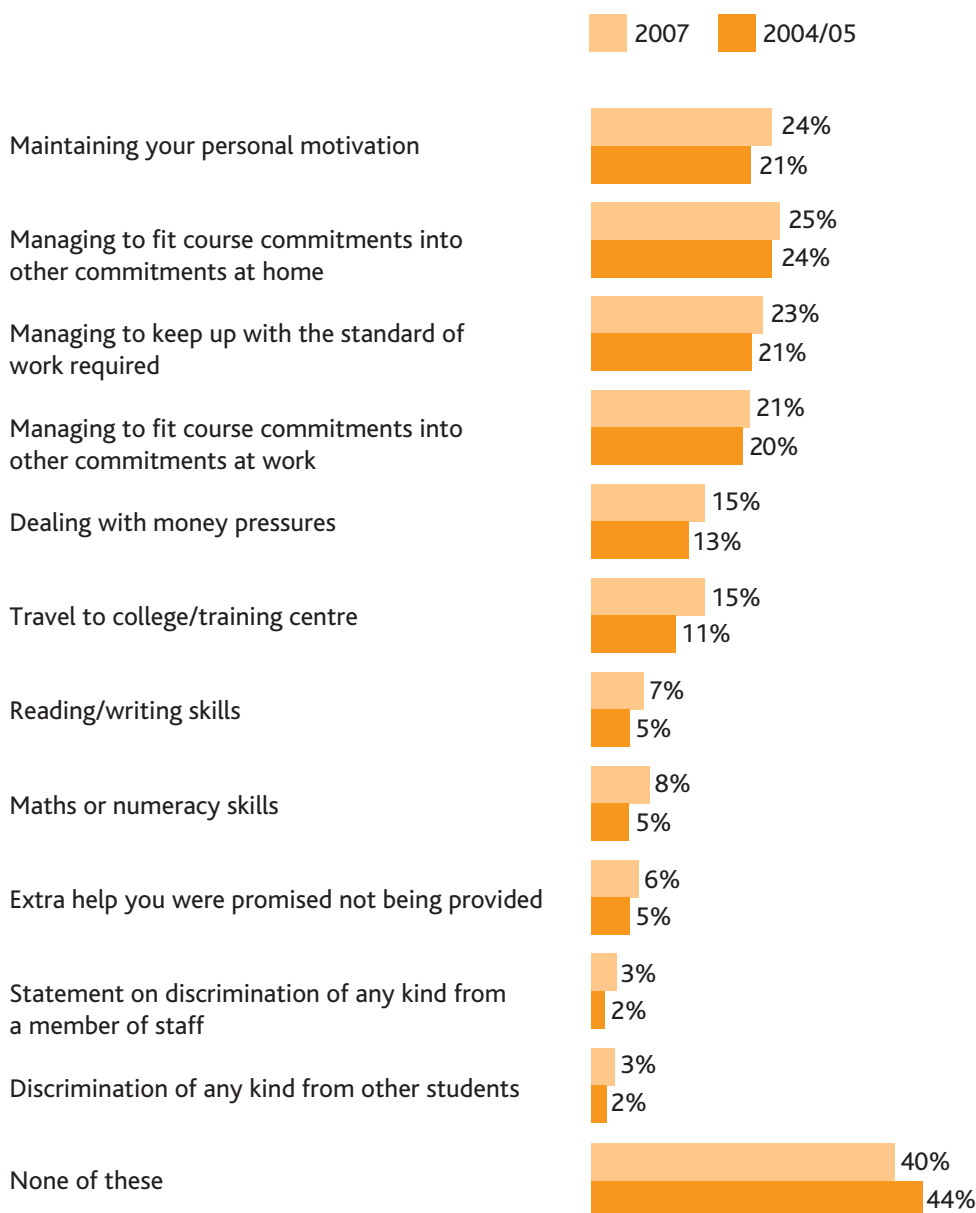


172 Sub-group variations can be identified for the various types of problem.

- **Managing to keep up with the standard of work required:** this was higher among 16- to 18-year-olds, especially female learners in this age group, and (related to this) among those studying for Level 3 qualifications and/or at a sixth form college. It was also higher than average among black learners.
- **Maintaining motivation:** there was less variation for this problem, but it was more likely to be mentioned by those in the black Caribbean and mixed ethnic groups, as well as by those at a sixth form college, and by learners studying visual and performing arts and media or on business administration, management and professional courses.
- **Maths/numeracy skills and reading/writing skills:** this was highest for those on Entry Level or Level 1 courses with no prior qualifications. It was also mentioned more frequently by black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi learners. As well as those studying maths and English or language courses, these problems were also mentioned more frequently by those on construction courses.
- **Managing to fit in with home commitments:** this problem was mentioned more frequently by older learners (25 or over), women, and those studying at Level 4 or Level 5, as well as by white respondents. Learners studying business administration, management and professional courses, and health, social care and public services programmes were most likely to say that they had had this type of problem.
- **Work commitments:** again, this was more of an issue for people studying at Level 4 or Level 5, for white respondents, and for those studying business administration, management and professional courses, and health, social care and public services programmes. It was also mentioned more frequently by women and by learners aged 19 or over.

Figure 17: Problems encountered during the course over time

Have you had problems with any of the following?



Note: the base was 10,561 FE learners for wave 13 (2007) and 10,548 FE learners for wave 10 (2004/05).

- **Dealing with money pressures:** learners aged 19 to 24 were the most likely to say that they had experienced money pressures, as were women and those studying at Level 3 or above. It was also mentioned more frequently by black respondents, and by those studying hairdressing and beauty therapy.
- **Travel:** this was more of a problem for 16- to 18-year-olds and those studying at Level 3, and for those studying either at sixth form college or a specialist or other provider, as well as for those from black and mixed ethnic groups. The subjects where this was more frequently mentioned were hairdressing and beauty therapy, and visual and performing arts and media.

173 Early leavers were more likely than other learners to mention the various problems (78 per cent said they had experienced at least one), and in particular they were more likely to say that they had had a problem maintaining their personal motivation (36 per cent).

Help and advice

174 As was noted above, three respondents in five (60 per cent) said that they had experienced at least one type of problem. Of these, 31 per cent said that they had sought help with the problem from their learning provider. This was slightly higher than the proportion in the 2004/05 survey (27 per cent).

175 The learners most likely to have sought help were those aged under 25 (36 per cent), and those studying at either Level 3 or at Level 4 or above (35 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively).

176 Black African and Pakistani or Bangladeshi learners were also more likely than average to have sought help from their provider (46 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively).

177 When respondents did turn to their provider for help, three-quarters said the help they received had been useful (77 per cent), while a fifth said it had not been very useful or not at all useful (22 per cent). The proportion who said the help they received had been very useful was higher than in 2004/05 (47 per cent, compared with 41 per cent).

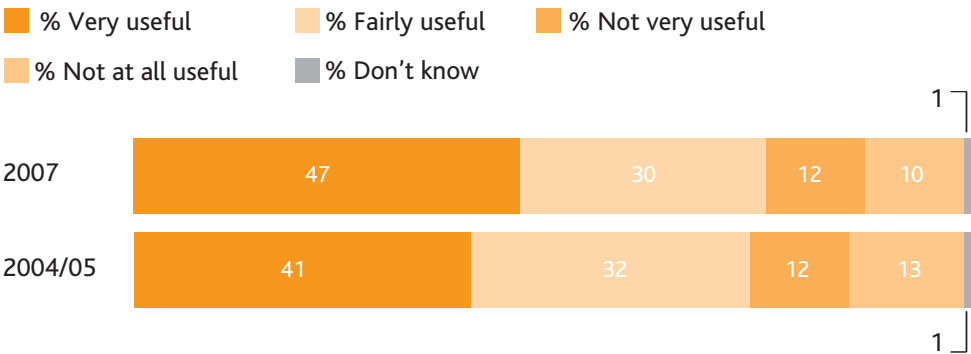
178 Overall, there was no difference between men and women. But, while there was no difference by age for female learners, men aged 25 or over were far less likely to say that the help had been useful (+35 net useful).

179 Views were also more positive among those studying at a higher level, and among black respondents.

180 The proportion of early leavers who had sought help with a problem was similar to that for other learners, but they were less likely to have found the help useful (+21 net useful). The proportion of early leavers who had made a complaint was also similar to other learners (learners' complaints are discussed next).

Figure 18: The usefulness of help and advice received over time

How useful was any help and/or advice you received?



Note: the base was 2,095 FE learners who sought help for wave 13 (2007) and 1,661 FE learners who sought help for wave 10 (2004/05).

Learners' complaints

181 Overall, 13 per cent of learners said that they had at some point made a complaint to the college or provider about their course or about some other experiences – a slightly higher proportion than in the 2004/05 survey (10 per cent). This was lower among those aged 25 or over (10 per cent), and higher among those studying at a higher level (17 per cent at Level 3 or above). It should be noted that, as in previous years, 'complaint' is defined by the learner and does not mean that the learner sought or initiated a formal complaints process.

182 Those learners studying engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional courses, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and visual and performing arts and media were most likely to have made a complaint.

183 Learners who had made a complaint were less satisfied with their learning experience overall, although the majority were still positive: 75 per cent were satisfied and 20 per cent dissatisfied. This indicates that, although complaints can lead to a less favourable impression of the course overall, many learners were prepared to see their complaint as a single negative incident in the context of a generally positive experience.

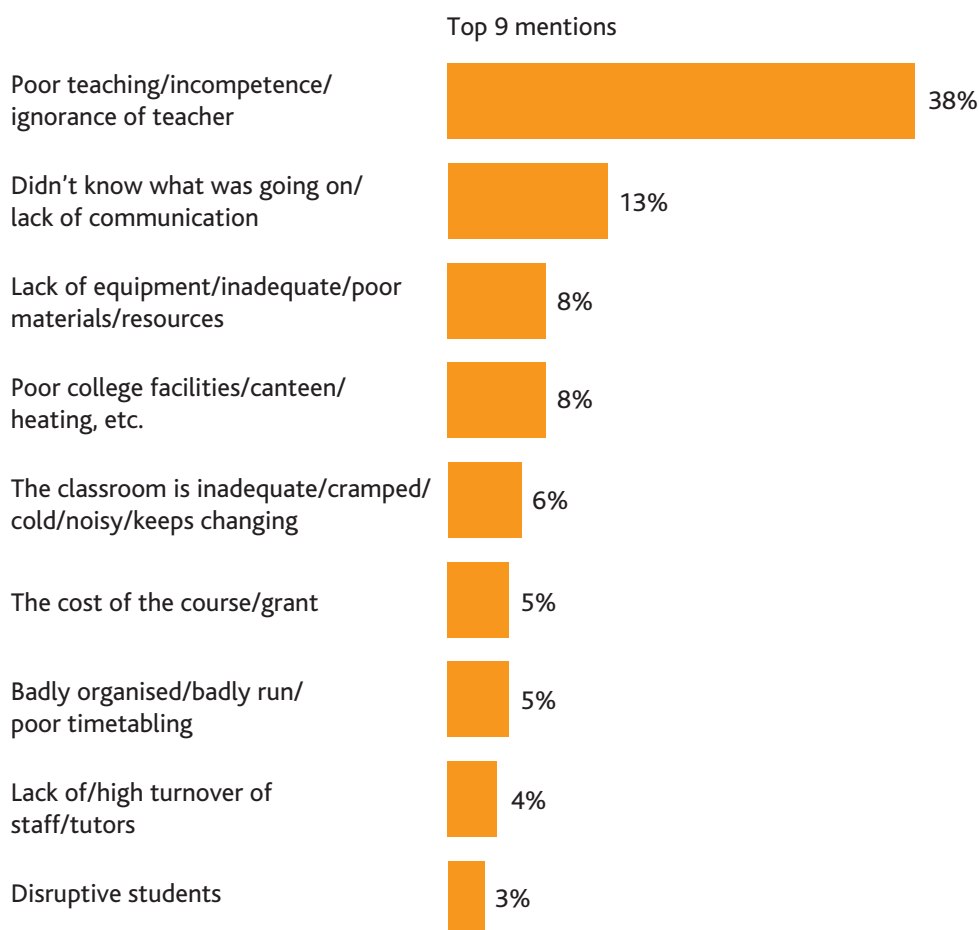
184 By far the most common reason for complaint was poor teaching or the incompetence of the teacher (38 per cent), and this was higher among learners aged under 25 and studying at Level 3 or above. Lack of communication was mentioned more frequently as a reason for complaint by women aged 25 or over, and this reflects the more negative views on communication among this group (noted at paragraphs 122 and 123). The reasons for complaint are shown in Figure 19.

185 When asked which statement best described the outcome of their complaint, more than one learner in three (38 per cent) said that there had been an outcome that satisfied them, while 18 per cent said that there had been an outcome but it was not satisfactory. Two in five (41 per cent) said there had been no outcome to the complaint at all. There were no sub-group differences on this question.

186 These findings are similar to those measured in previous years.

Figure 19: Reasons for complaint

What was your complaint about?



Note: the base was 1,473 FE learners for wave 13 who made a complaint.



Attitudes to Learning and the Benefits of Learning

187 This section first examines learners' general attitudes towards learning, both now and when they left school. It then looks at the benefits that learners felt they had derived from the course, and the likelihood that they would undertake further learning.

Feelings about education on leaving school

188 The majority of learners said that they had had generally positive feelings about education when they left school (57 per cent), while one in five (21 per cent) said they had had negative feelings. These findings (shown in Table 15) are slightly less positive than those in the 2004/05 survey, when 60 per cent said they had had generally positive feelings about education.

189 Attitudes differed according to the level to which respondents were qualified prior to their FE course (Table 15). Those qualified to a higher level tended to be more positive. Related to this, those with learning difficulties were more negative than other learners.

190 In addition, feelings about education on leaving school were more positive among women than among men (59 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively, said they had had positive feelings), and were more negative among learners aged 25 or over (23 per cent said their feelings had been generally negative). In terms of ethnic origin, views were most positive among Indian (71 per cent positive), Pakistani or Bangladeshi (73 per cent) and black African learners (75 per cent). White people were, comparatively speaking, less positive (only 55 per cent).

Table 15: Feelings about education on leaving school, by learning difficulties and prior attainment level

| All | | Learning difficulties | | Prior attainment level | | |
|---|----------|-----------------------|---------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | Yes | No | No qualification | Level 2 or below | Level 3 or above |
| Base | (10,588) | (835) | (9,749) | (488) | (4,742) | (4,233) |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Generally positive feelings about education | 57 | 42 | 58 | 40 | 51 | 65 |
| Generally negative feelings about education | 21 | 30 | 20 | 27 | 23 | 18 |
| Not bothered either way about education | 21 | 24 | 20 | 27 | 25 | 17 |
| Don't know | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 1 |

Note: the base was 10,588 FE learners for wave 14.

191 Positive attitudes were more prevalent among learners in sixth form colleges than at other types of provider, and most negative among those on 'access to HE' courses. Learners studying business administration, management and professional courses, and English, languages and communication were most likely to say that they had had positive feelings about education when they left school, while those on health, social care and public services courses were the most negative.

192 There was no difference between the views of early leavers and those of other learners.

Current feelings about learning

193 Table 16 shows learners’ current feelings about learning. The majority agreed that they were carrying on learning in order to improve their career prospects (80 per cent) and that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it (72 per cent). Just under half (46 per cent) said they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects, while only a minority agreed that they carried on learning because they could not think of anything better to do, or said that they did not really enjoy learning. Overall, this confirms a mainly positive view of learning among those taking an FE course, and the figures are similar to those obtained in the 2004/05 survey.

194 The main difference in attitudes was by age, with older learners (25 or over) more likely to say that they enjoyed and got a buzz from learning, but less likely to be learning to improve their career prospects and for the social aspects. Learners aged 16 to 18 were the most likely to be learning mostly because of the social aspects, and were a little more likely than older respondents to say that they did not really enjoy learning or were doing it because they could not think of anything better to do.

195 The one difference by gender was that women were more likely than men to say that they enjoyed and got a buzz from learning (76 per cent, compared with 67 per cent). The main difference by ethnicity was that Asian learners were more likely than other respondents to say that they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects.

196 There were also differences by level studied and prior attainment. Those with a high prior qualification attainment (Level 3 or above) were more likely than other learners to say that they enjoyed learning, while those qualified to Level 2 or below were the most likely to say that they were learning to improve their career prospects. Those without any prior qualifications were more likely to say that they were learning for the social aspects, and were more likely to agree with the less positive statements. The same applied to those with learning difficulties.

Table 16: Current attitudes towards learning, by age

| All | | Age | | |
|--|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | 16–18 | 19–24 | 25+ |
| Base | (10,588) | (3,939) | (1,698) | (4,867) |
| | % | % | % | % |
| I am carrying on learning in order to improve my career prospects | 80 | 91 | 91 | 73 |
| I enjoy learning and get a buzz from it | 72 | 56 | 65 | 82 |
| I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects | 46 | 60 | 47 | 39 |
| I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do | 11 | 13 | 10 | 10 |
| I don't really enjoy learning | 5 | 9 | 6 | 3 |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 |

Note: the base was 10,588 FE learners for wave 14.

197 In terms of level of study, those studying at Entry Level or Level 1 were more likely to say that they enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it, but also to say that they enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects. This indicates two distinct groups within the learners studying at Level 1 or below – those qualified to a higher level, who are studying for interest or enjoyment, and those with limited or no qualifications, who are more attracted to the social aspects.

198 Differences by subject reflected the age profile of learners and (in the case of career prospects) whether the course was vocational or not.

199 Respondents who said that they had positive feelings about learning when they had left school were more likely to say that they now enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it; otherwise, attitudes towards learning did not vary according to feelings after leaving school.

200 Table 17 shows learners' attitudes towards some specific elements of learning. These again confirm a mainly positive view of learning, especially in relation to liking a new challenge and not feeling out of place in a classroom situation. These attitudes were also more positive than in the 2004/05 survey, particularly in terms of managing time and enjoying new responsibilities (both showing an increase of seven percentage points in net agreement).

201 On most items, there was a difference by prior attainment, as shown in Table 17. Those qualified to a higher level prior to their course tended to be more positive about the various issues, and this was most pronounced for enjoying new responsibilities. The one exception was self-motivation, where findings were as positive among those with no prior qualifications as among those qualified to Level 3 or above.

202 If we compare this with the level of study, those studying at a higher level (Level 3 or above) were also more likely to say that they enjoyed responsibility and did not feel out of place in a classroom situation. Those studying at Level 4 or Level 5 were less likely to say that they got nervous about the standard of work required. Again, however, the exception is self-motivation, where those studying at Level 2 or below were more likely to agree that they found it easy to motivate themselves than those studying at Level 3 or above (+68 net agree, compared with +57).

203 Demographic analysis shows that women were more likely than men to agree that they could manage their time and found it easy to motivate themselves, but were more likely to agree that they got very nervous about the standard of work required.

204 Learners aged 16 to 18 were less likely to say that they enjoyed new responsibilities, while older learners were less likely to feel out of place in a classroom situation or to have difficulties managing their time or motivating themselves.

Table 17: Current attitudes towards learning, by prior attainment level

| All | | Prior attainment level | | |
|--|----------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | No qualification | Level 2 or below | Level 3 or above |
| Base | (10,588) | (488) | (4,742) | (4,233) |
| Net agree score (+/-) | % | % | % | % |
| I feel out of place in a classroom situation | -72 | -47 | -65 | -80 |
| I always like a new challenge | +86 | +76 | +85 | +89 |
| I can never seem to manage my time properly | -47 | -40 | -43 | -52 |
| I find it easy to motivate myself for learning | +63 | +66 | +58 | +67 |
| I get very nervous about the standard of work required | -31 | -13 | -25 | -40 |
| I do not usually enjoy new responsibilities | -57 | -24 | -51 | -67 |

Note: the base was 10,588 FE learners for wave 14.

205 While Asian learners were more likely than other respondents to say that they found it easy to motivate themselves for learning, along with black learners they were less positive on a number of items: being out of place in a classroom situation, being nervous about the standard of work required, and not enjoying new responsibilities. Black learners were also more likely to agree that they could never seem to manage their time properly.

206 Early leavers were slightly less positive on the various issues, with the largest differences in relation to feeling out of place in a classroom situation and being able to motivate themselves. In the earlier question, early leavers were less likely to say that they had enjoyed learning and got a buzz from it (66 per cent) but were otherwise similar to other learners in their general feelings about learning.

The benefits of participation in learning

207 Learners acknowledged that they had gained a number of benefits from their course, with more than four respondents in five agreeing that they had greater enthusiasm for the subject, had gained skills that they could use for a job, felt more confident in their ability to learn, and felt more creative and prepared to try new things. Details are shown in Figure 20.

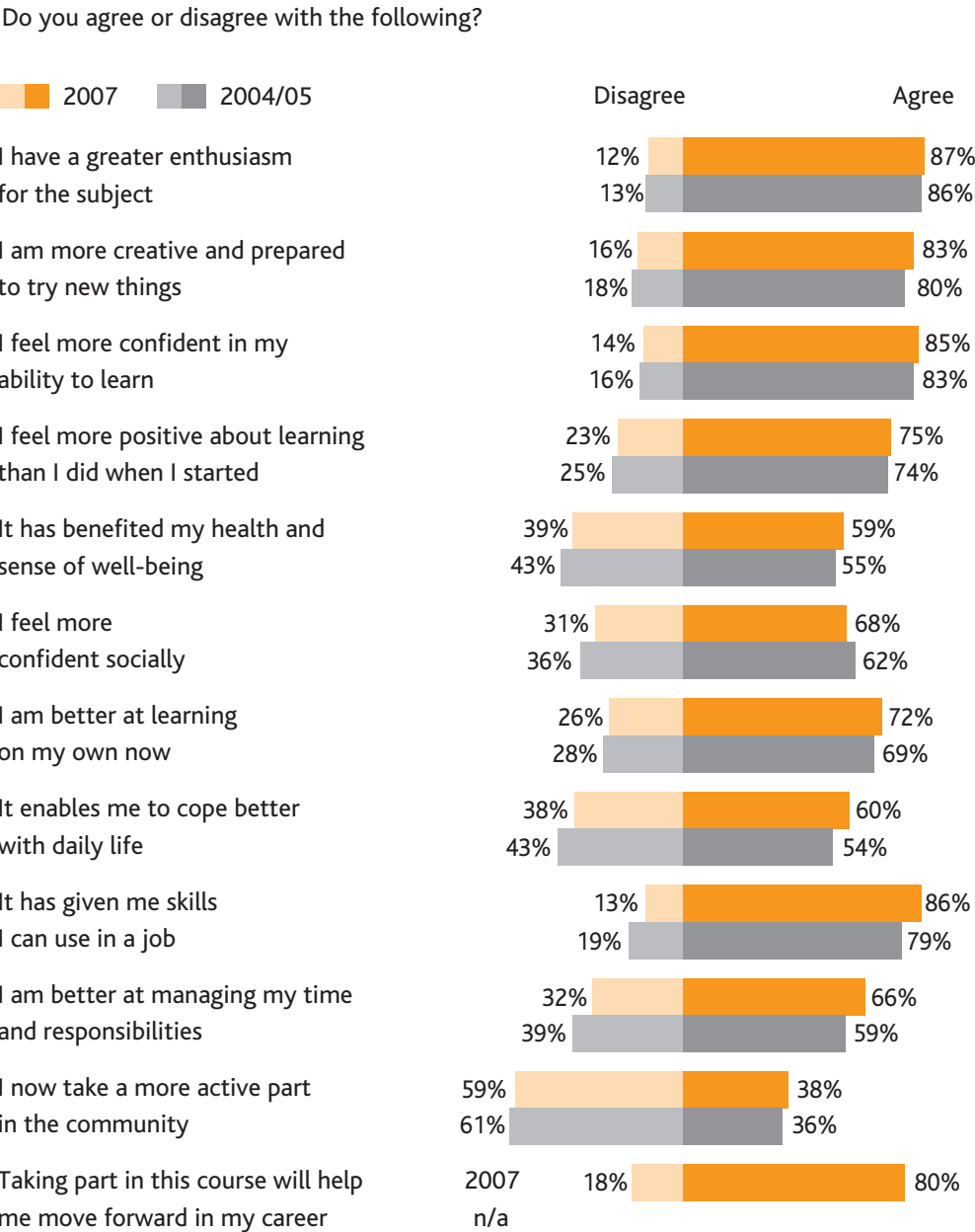
208 Learners were more positive about a number of these items than they had been in the 2004/05 survey: gaining skills they could use for a job, feeling more confident socially, being better at managing time and responsibilities, and being better able to cope with daily life.

209 Learners aged 25 or over were less likely to report most of the benefits listed. The exception to this was gaining greater enthusiasm for the subject, which showed no difference by age.

210 In terms of the level of study, those taking a course at Entry Level or Level 1 were less likely to say that they had gained job-related skills, but were more likely to report benefits related to attitudes towards learning, as well as wider impacts (e.g. confidence, health and well-being). This confirms previous research among Skills for Life learners, which identified that the strongest impacts (at least in the shorter term) were in relation to self-esteem and encouraging a more positive attitude towards learning (DfES, 2007a).

211 In general, Asian and black African learners tended to be the most positive about the benefits they had gained, as were those studying hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and health, social care and public services. Those on foundation programmes or studying visual and performing arts and media were more likely than average to report the wider benefits of learning. Learners on 'access to HE' courses were also more positive than average, especially in relation to confidence and enthusiasm, managing their time and learning on their own.

Figure 20: The benefits of participation over time



Note: the base was 10,588 FE learners for wave 14 (2007) and 10,536 FE learners for wave 11 (2004/05).

212 Early leavers were consistently less likely to report the various benefits (around 15 to 20 percentage points lower for each benefit). This level of difference is consistent with other findings in the survey (e.g. in levels of satisfaction).

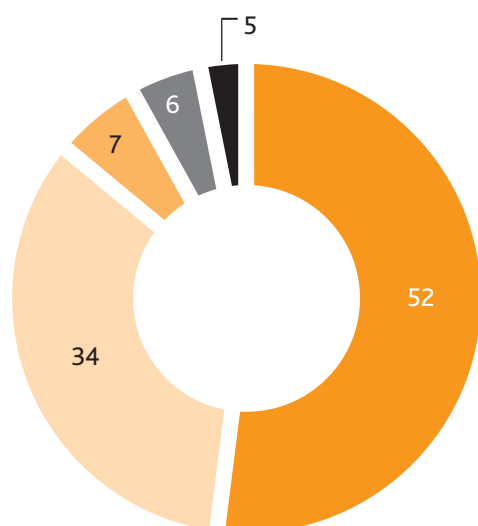
Usefulness of the course/ training for employment

213 As has already been noted, most learners felt that their course had given them job-related benefits. When asked directly, around half said that the course had been essential for their current job or a future job, while a further 34 per cent said it was not essential but would help them. Results are shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: The impact of learning on learner's current job

What would you say about your course and your current job?

- % Essential for learner's current job
- % Not essential but will help in current job
- % Will not help in learner's current job
- % Irrelevant – learner not working/intend to work
- % Don't know



Note: the base was 10,593 FE learners for wave 12.

214 Sub-group variations reflect the type of course being studied (vocational subjects being more important for work) and the life stage of the respondent (older learners were less likely to say that the course was important for their employment).

215 Related to this, those studying at Entry Level and Level 1 were less likely to see the course as essential for work – and indeed 22 per cent said that it would not help them and 13 per cent that it was irrelevant because they were not in work or were not intending to work in the future. Those studying at Level 3 or above were the most likely to say that the course was essential to their employment (58 per cent).

Likelihood of undertaking further learning

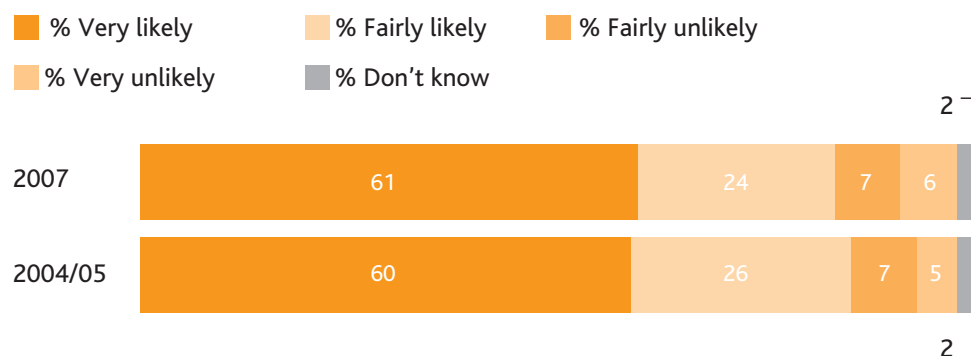
216 The majority of learners (61 per cent) said that they would be very likely to undertake further learning in the future (e.g. in the next three years), and overall 85 per cent said that they were likely to undertake further learning. This is one percentage point less than in the 2004/05 survey, where 86 per cent of learners said they were likely to undertake further learning. Results are shown in Figure 22.

217 The likelihood of undertaking further learning was higher among women (63 per cent very likely), those with a higher prior attainment level (63 per cent qualified to Level 3 or above), and those at a sixth form college (70 per cent). In addition, it was higher among those taking a course in sciences or mathematics, visual and performing arts and media, humanities, and English, languages and communication. It was also higher among Asian and black learners (67 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively), especially black African learners (79 per cent).

218 The following groups were less likely to say that they would undertake further learning in the future: those aged 19 to 24 (56 per cent very likely), those studying at Level 4 or Level 5 (56 per cent) and those studying for NVQs (55 per cent). While early leavers were also less likely to say that they would undertake further learning in the future, 51 per cent still said they would be very likely to do so.

Figure 22: Likelihood of undertaking further learning over time

How likely are you to undertake further learning in the future (say, in the next three years)?



Note: the base was 31,742 FE learners for waves 12, 13 and 14 (2007), and 31,648 FE learners for waves 9, 10 and 11 (2004/05).

Learners from learndirect



219 This section summarises the findings for learners from learndirect on relevant issues.

Satisfaction with the learning experience

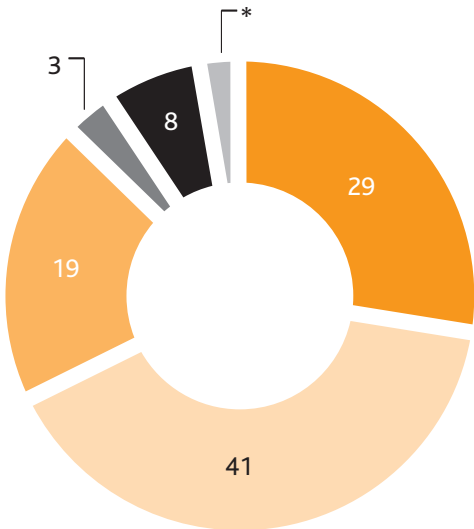
220 Nine learners in ten said that they were satisfied with their learning experience (89 per cent), including 29 per cent who were extremely satisfied. Just 8 per cent were dissatisfied. These figures are similar to those for other FE learners, and represent an increase in satisfaction since the 2004/05 survey (when 23 per cent of learndirect learners were extremely satisfied). Details are shown in Figure 23. In general, findings for learndirect learners were very similar to those for other FE learners, except where indicated below.

221 As was the case for other FE learners, satisfaction was lower among those who had left their course early (22 per cent of whom were dissatisfied), and these respondents were consistently less positive about various aspects of the learning experience.

Figure 23: Satisfaction with current learning experience in learndirect

How satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/training provider?

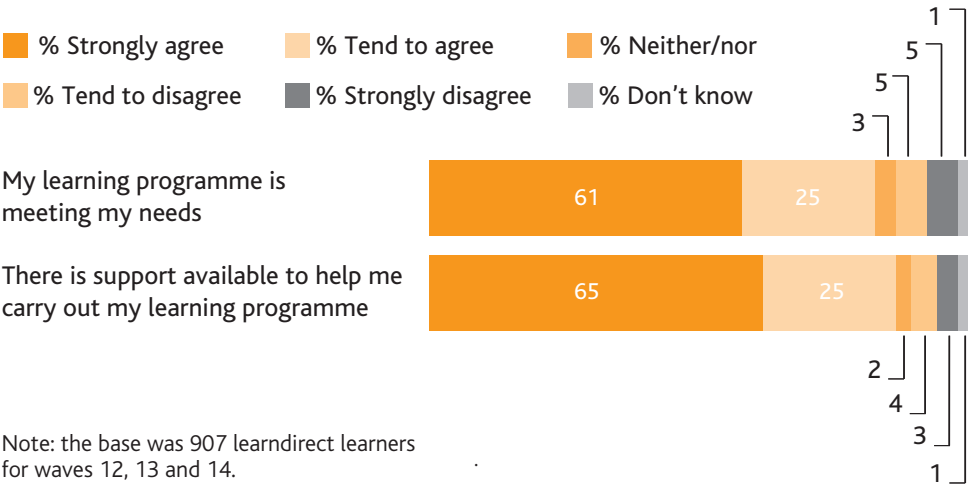
- % Extremely satisfied
- % Very satisfied
- % Fairly satisfied
- % Neither/nor
- % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied
- % Don't know



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Figure 24: Needs and support in learndirect

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



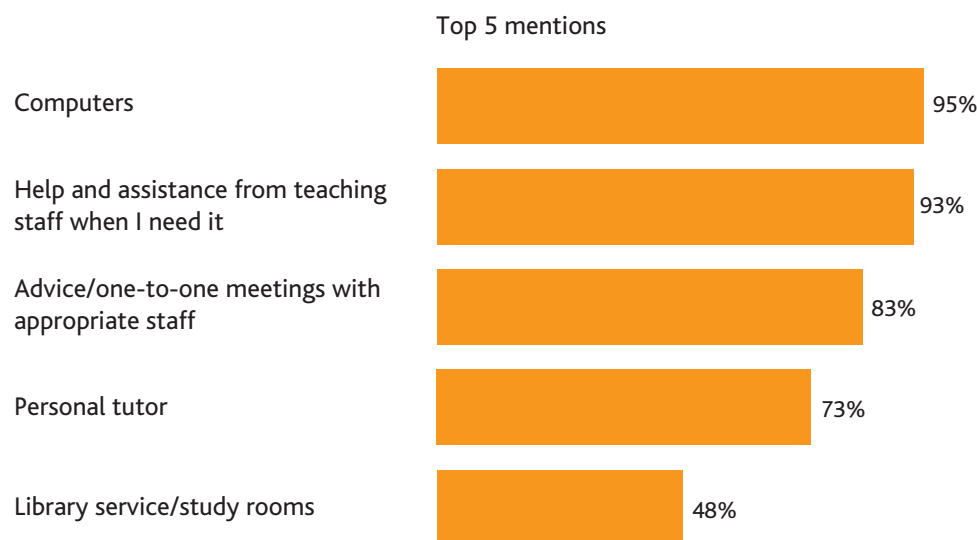
Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Support available

222 Three respondents in five (61 per cent) agreed strongly that the learning programme was meeting their needs, and a further 25 per cent said they tended to agree. One in ten (10 per cent) disagreed that the programme was meeting their needs. These findings are shown in Figure 24.

Figure 25: The type of support available in learndirect

Which of the following types of support, if any, have been made available to you at your college/provider?



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

223 Responses were similar on the question of the support available. Nine learners in ten (90 per cent) agreed that support was available to help them carry out their learning programme (this included 65 per cent who strongly agreed), while 7 per cent disagreed.

224 Figure 25 shows the types of support that learners said had been made available to them. Almost all respondents said that computers (95 per cent) and help from tutors or teachers (93 per cent) were available when required.

Satisfaction with support received from learndirect

225 Respondents also registered high levels of satisfaction with the support provided by learndirect (either from tutors or learndirect centre staff). Around one learner in four (27 per cent) was extremely satisfied, and overall 90 per cent were satisfied, while 8 per cent were dissatisfied. This is very similar to the level of satisfaction measured in the 2004/05 survey.

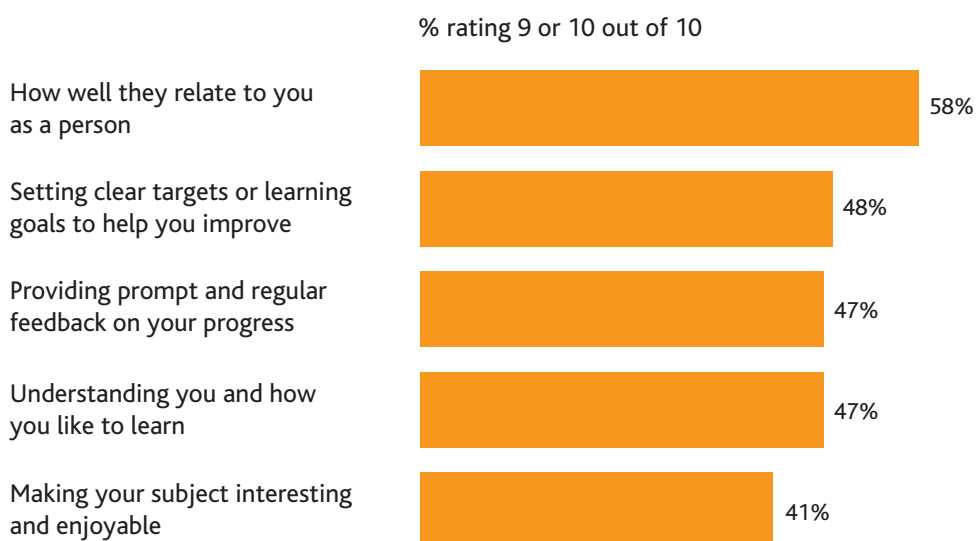
226 Respondents were asked to rate two specific aspects of support on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represented 'very poor' and 10 meant 'excellent'. More than half of respondents gave a score of 9 or 10 for two items: helping new people settle in (58 per cent) and providing support when learners have problems (53 per cent). The proportions giving a score of less than 5 for the two items were just 4 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively.

Tutors and centre staff

227 Respondents were asked to rate a number of aspects of teaching, using a scale of 1 ('very poor') to 10 ('excellent'). Views were generally positive on all the items, with between 41 per cent and 58 per cent giving a rating of 9 or 10 out of 10. Details are shown in Figure 26. Learners were particularly positive about how well teaching staff related to them as a person (58 per cent gave a rating of 9 or 10). Very few respondents gave a negative rating to these aspects of teaching (i.e. a rating of less than 5 out of 10); this was highest for providing prompt and regular feedback on progress (9 per cent).

Figure 26: Views on teaching in learndirect

How would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training?



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

228 When asked to rate learndirect on making sure that enough teachers, tutors, trainers or assessors are available, around one learner in three (36 per cent) gave a rating of 9 or 10 out of 10, while 43 per cent gave a rating of between 6 and 8, 13 per cent a rating of 5, and 8 per cent less than 5. On this question, the findings for learndirect learners were less positive than for other FE learners.

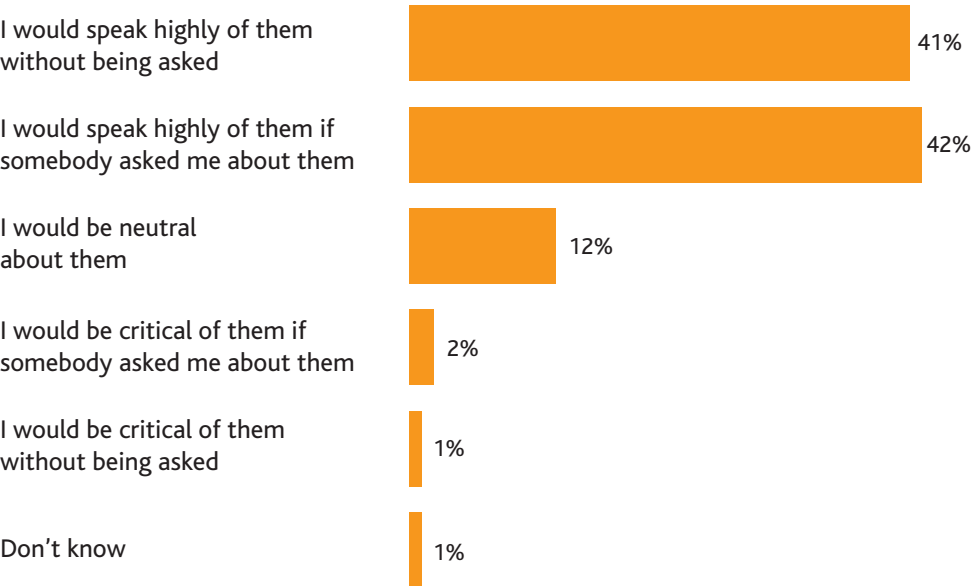
229 More than four learners in five (83 per cent) said that they would speak highly of learndirect, either without being asked (41 per cent) or if somebody asked them (42 per cent). Just 4 per cent would be critical, and the remaining 12 per cent said they would be neutral. These views were more positive than those expressed by other FE learners about their provider.

Fairness and respect

230 Nearly all respondents agreed that they were treated fairly (96 per cent) and with respect (97 per cent) by staff at learndirect, and most respondents agreed strongly. Details are shown in Figure 28.

Figure 27: Advocating the learndirect provider

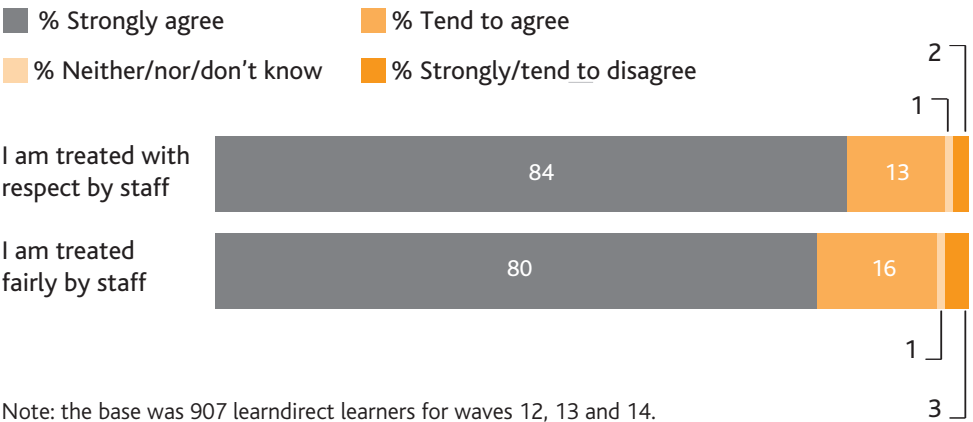
Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your college/provider in their capacity as a training provider?



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Figure 28: Fairness and respect in learndirect

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.



Learner involvement

231 Figure 29 shows attitudes towards the perceived level of consultation during the course. The majority of respondents agreed that learndirect did ask for their views on the quality of the learning programme (63 per cent), but views were more mixed on the other items listed in Figure 29. The findings were also more negative than for other FE learners, particularly in relation to asking for views on ways to improve the learning programme and asking for views on the college (or learndirect centre). Female learners were most negative about the level of consultation on these issues.

232 Among respondents who said that they had been consulted on at least one of the items shown in Figure 29, three in four (75 per cent) agreed that learndirect had responded to these views, while 12 per cent disagreed.

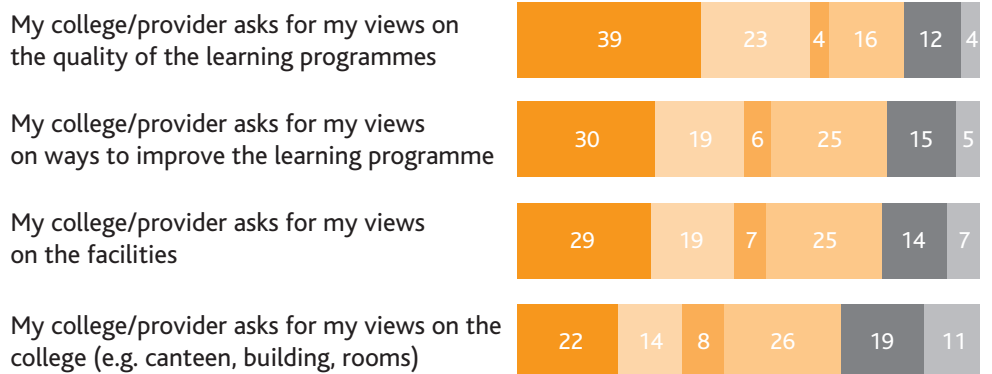
Likelihood of undertaking further learning

233 Just over half (54 per cent) of learndirect learners said that they would be very likely to undertake further learning in the future (e.g. in the next three years), while a further 25 per cent said they would be fairly likely to do so. The proportion who said they would be very likely to undertake further learning in the future was highest among those studying mathematics or sciences and those living in the most deprived areas. The overall figure was also higher than in the 2004/05 survey (46 per cent).

Figure 29: Consulting learndirect learners

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

% Strongly agree % Tend to agree % Neither/nor
 % Tend to disagree % Strongly disagree % Don't know



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Figure 30: Likelihood of learndirect learners undertaking further learning

How likely are you to undertake further learning in the future (say, in the next three years)?

% Very likely % Fairly likely % Fairly unlikely
 % Very unlikely % Don't know



Note: the base was 907 learndirect learners for waves 12, 13 and 14.

Annex

References

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